

# THINGS YET TO BE KNOWN

#OTAH KELECHI



A BOOK DEDICATED TO:

# OLAUDAH EQUIANO

# **OTAH'S BEYOND FICTION**

First published by myself by OTAH'S BEYOND FICTION, 20-12-2021.

Message OTAH directly on Otahanya@yahoo.com,  
kelechiotah7@gmail.com.

Copyright © Otah Kelechi, 2021

The moral right of the author has been asserted

All rights reserved

Without limiting the rights under copyright reserved above, no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in or introduced into a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise), without prior written permission of both the copyright owner, the above publisher of this book and lawyer.

Printed by OTAH KELECHI. A catalogue record for this book is available in the States Library.

ISBN: 978-98-956-318-9

[www.otahsbeyondfiction.org](http://www.otahsbeyondfiction.org)

# **BEYOND**

# **FICTION**





# VOLUME OF ENGLISH SLAVE TRADE

FROM AFRICA 1690 - 1807

## ANNUAL AVERAGE

1690 1807

COASTAL REGION	TOTAL NO OF SLAVES	PERCENTAGE
SENEGAMBIA	141,300	5.5 %
SIERRA LEONE	111,600	4.3 %
WINDWARD COAST	299,300	11.6 %
GOLD COAST	473,800	18.4 %
BIGHT OF BENIN	292,700	11.3 %
BIGHT OF BIAFRA	776,400	30.1 %
ANGOLA AND MOZAMBIQUE	468,300	18.2 %
OTHERS UNKNOWN	16,100	0.6 %
	2,579,400	100 %

NO	YEAR	AVERAGE
1	1690-1700	900
2	1701-1710	12,000
3	1711-1720	14,100
4	1721-1730	14,200
5	1731-1740	20,700
6	1741-1750	25,500
7	1751-1760	23,100
8	1761-1770	27,200
9	1771-1780	19,600
10	1781-1790	32,600
11	1791-1800	32,600
12	1801-1807	32,000

FROM THE ATLANTIC  
SLAVE TRADE CENTRE FOR CULTURE

II. *ba*, a Sea-port.

II. *ngo*  
*ga*. Lastly, the Kingdom of *Loango*, is situated between that of *Congo* strictly taken, on the South; the Territories of the *Ansicans*, on the East; the Kingdom of *Biafar*, on the North; and the Sea of *Congo*, on the West. It produces abundance of Ivory and Fruit-trees, more especially Palms, of which the Natives make Bread, Wine and Oil; and affords plenty of all sorts of necessary Provisions. The Sea-port Towns are *Loango* the Capital, which has communicated its Name to the whole Kingdom; *Sellaga*, or *Sollaga*; *Quanni*; and *Majumba*. The Inland Towns are *Katta*, *Boecemeala*, and *Setta*, or *Zetta*.

II. It remains only to give an Account of the third and last maritim Part of the lower *Ethiopia*, that is to say, the Kingdom of *Biafar*; under which Name some Geographers comprehend all that Country, which is bounded on the East, by the Lake and River of *Niger*; on the North, by the Kingdoms of *Borno* and *Zanfara*; and on the West, by that of *Benin* and *St. Thomas's Bay*. The Air in these Parts is excessive Hot, and the Rain falls from the Month of *April* to that of *August*: The Soil brings forth a great number of Palm-trees, with which a pleasant kind of Wine is usually made, and the Champain Country breeds Elephants, Buffles and terrible Serpents. The Na-

## PART ONE

\*\*\*

## CHAPTER ONE

In the steady and continuous approach of distant voices of men singing and approaching this "YET TO BE KNOWN" bight of a state west of the newly discovered dark continent, people were beginning to raise off their beds and out of their temporal trade tents to emerge this supposed intruders.

It was midnight.

Nobody knew nor believed these men were ever going to return least emerging victor. Thus; individuals and groups, trade partners and even this Igbo-village had at large beared grievances of their loss to Opobo.

Now to this and in respond to the noise of continuous chants by these in-sailing men, people, both those at the beach residing and indigenes of that island began trooping out in mass to behold in this unrest, that undoubtedly, it is the one hundred men who marched into battle in Opobo when the Jaja called.

It all began in Ubani; the popular Bonny, four weeks ago following a heavy in flood of battle dressed men who were said to had assembled in Obi-Igbo, alongside some important figures from Opobo, who they had come in with. This 'important men of Opobo', were said to had come with a confirming message from Jaja, the chief of Opobo, over the long rumoured news of the death of a very popular Awka merchant of note, who was shot dead by some Portuguese fort-keepers and afterwards, the reprisal attacks that it resulted to and overwhelming catastrophe that had since lived off it.

The tragic demise of Nduka, 'the merchant' and his two servants of 'year of last service', happened in cause of rising tension between them and these Portuguese they had gone trading with. Nduka who came along with several other commodities, asides small tools bought along the Ndoki waterside markets through Imo river and other smith works brought already from Awka, had with him finely finished guns, exact replica of the Portuguese type he claimed to had gotten from a particular blacksmith in Awka. Their accusation condemned Nduka to either had stolen this arm's or probably kidnaped one of their officers to it's acquisition. Nduka's rage to this had provoked the first shooter and following, his counterparts who had no other option but to self defence as the deceased servants, the two with whom he came with were already initiating a reprisal.



In this manner, witnesses got over these men, mobbed them and set their forts razed. Ever since, about two Portuguese naval ships stationed in that world part had come in turns bombarding and turning Opobo into ruins, regardless, the Jaja's personality.

Now, in turns of time, the Jaja's resistance having proved futile began his call for help from surrounding neighbours. These Opobo men and their volunteer counterparts also got into the islands with this plea of volunteering assistance from that bights part, seeking men in battle.

'It was on this note that Ahamefula; a man of his early thirties joined in line and came to have in his lifetime, a very first battle experience'.

This Ahamefula's condition is as a result of being from a particular Igbo set -the Aro's.

'Aro units, villages and towns are for them an only-inheritance and for others a refuge for all, place of God and confederate of all Aro inheritances, majorly inhabited and indigenalised by all Aro people, all facing the age old Arochukwu-Okike Abiama as its governing and spiritual capital. Here, Ahamefula hails from –Arochukwu'.

Nevertheless, so many legends and adventures are told about the Aro's in warfare and battles but less likely is told that until particular periods, the Aro's themselves never fought their own wars.

The trembling sounds of canon's had roared and heavy fire of automatic gun boats rained. Even Ahamefula had testified in this first time face to face with death, the many said things about the might of the reds.

Its true some died at the shocking blast of these canon's and some others at the trembles of its sounds. But somehow and luckily, even in the midst of excessive sustainance of casualties and as determination may have it, victor fell to their advantage.

'A victor of sadness, a victor of unforgettable traumas'. No one still happens to get over the pictures of canon bombs, tearing an entire crew into bits.

The war had come and gone and the men from Bonny sails for departure with three big canoes with which they sailed with their war spoils. Ahamefula's group leading the line; being the first canoe in this lead, and carrier of most spoils and very few fighters.

However, it became on this night of their return as people trooped out to witness their incoming that their songs and chants of war victor changed into chants and songs of war advance followed by a line switched-left by the later two canoes carrying most of the returning war men that the unimagined occurred and all hell got lose.

An impending doom.

Tension had began its grip-hold with young men scrambling for anything tool for pursuit in possible defence of the now suspected vulnerable, over a sensed dawn of savagery, whilst the women, young and old shouted above their voices to the other side waking and raising high voices of alert to the redmen on the other side of the beaches estuary, where they largely settle, away from the mosquito disturbed upper-body.

Nonetheless, in all futility, to this west bank harbouring most foreign merchants, an unwarranted slaughter bred.

One man running towards his gun and another –with a spear’ piercing through his back. Another running into his ship and getting hit by an arrow.

This dark-night, the lands of people's further west, beginning from the new Kalabar, became their safe haven.

It was a dark night and helplessly this took great effect.

The following morning at sunrise, regarding the late nights barbarism, the beach had filled to peak with numerous numbers of people, young and old, including little children, many who had come from the generally-Igbo compounds of the village, situated further from the beach, whose fair numbers had enlarged since many years integration of numerous new members from the heartland -‘to the ill trades victimization’, had all come to witness firsthand what had transpired, while the old people and adults had besieged for prosecution in befallen faces of disgust on both the nights before savagery and now the aftermath effects on Bonny’s already unstable economy.

Before time, like in a village square, the beach had quickly been turned into a jury place, where the old men and judges amongst them all sat on stools they had brought forthwith, following the incidents hearsay. And having now commenced, had carried along with questioning and listening to testimonies of all parties involved in these atrocity and their



opposing witnesses, regarding the night-before, regardless of their own personal disdain of the perpetrators offence.

'They had lived in harmony with the reds and particularly the Portuguese, for very many years and amongst many are witnesses to the time when the popular Portuguese name 'Bonny' made its trend. However, excluding these old men and the incident witnesses, it was also crystal obvious the overwhelming majorities disgust, mindlessly they still opened for jury'.

Nevertheless, the long proceeded jury hearing had since found difficulties in proceeding into judgement as it was a republic and both parties in the heat kept each other on push, all struggling to surpass the other with greater and more superior arguments.

While in this, Ajukwu Oko; one of the war commanders in his argument came countering a woman from the crowd.

'Our people, innocent people were in cold blood killed by this people. This people's own kiths and kin, that, you were not around to witness. So tell me, since when did it become difficult of us in the distinguishment between justice and injustice, cause even in the midst of the redmen's own world and ships, both public and private of them all, justice remains constant; an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth'.

On Ajukwu's pronouncement of the redmen, ships and 'private', Ahamefula had got upon him an immediate recall of a Dutch ship, a boy, his father and their crew, who he last traded with before his departure for Opobo.

This boy is Stewart.

It was on a late afternoon, just days before the inflood of the volunteering battlemen that this boy, just like his, of almost nine of age came persuading he do come make exchange with their goods, for his yams and oil palm.

The boys crew, however weren't in particular Portuguese or from one country, but with a private Dutch ship, and so the ease that followed their whole dealings.

In the negotiations and as well, the manoeuvring of trade arts, Ahamefula had soon gotten likeness for the young boy who even looks - inframe, slightly like Agbara -his son, regardless his skin mode, which is

too pulp and hair fur, opposing Agbara's locks.

Lately that evening, the trade turned party.

'It's French made. You do become as good a captain as myself'. Ahamefula remembers the boy's father saying these words to him as he brought along a new bottle of wine.

'What's your name'. He also remembers asking the boy's name that even after numerous efforts by almost the entire crew that he kept calling 'Stiiwot' instead, pushing everyone into great laughter that one almost fell on a burning log while laughing in his drunkenness.

With all this happy and remarkable memories going through Ahamefula's mind, Ahamefula was already inside the crew's now ravaged Dutch ship.

Treachery! Treachery!! A man upon a ship's broken balcony had come out shouting as all eyes turned on him from the jury square.

Suddenly a second man is seen marching quickly, out from the ship's interior and pushing this huge man to a bad fall. At this time, every one rose at once, and from that temporal square, running to the rescue of the fallen man and discovery of his statue and pusher.

"Did you see him, the grey beard man". A man asked repeatedly from the now arrived crowd, followed by another who came responding, "yes, the grey beard fighter", this other man highlighted.

This time, Ahamefula, confused inside the broken ship had come wondering within himself how possibly he had become so popular even without mingling with anyone. However, unknown to him, it had been those many looks and gazes from behind, even when he passed by his own platoon, and all of those several times, people seemed making observations of his person and start discussing among themselves, pointing to his shoulder shrink, undoubtedly, pondering how not just an Aro, but what one from a priestly lineage was doing in a war canoe.

He had walked onto that ship witnessing all that he had come to see, on the ship's own share of the night's chaos, where on the pass he had seen its captain and several crew members now lifeless. It wasn't until he heard clings and one's hiding footsteps and found hiding a heavily frightened Stewart, still alive, when shortly, the other man came - bounced up.

On the man's encounter, Ahamefula who already had sworn to Stewart an oath to keep him safe, and from all eyes of every other person whom he had now grown phobia for and his promise of a later return at midnight to take him away had come under the man's endless aggression, that Ahamefula must either start letting out whatsoever he is hiding, or risk his louding to everyone with one word, reason to come see for themselves one stealing from the dead.

Nevertheless, Ahamefula who came later in his confusion to push this man that spotted him through and into the ship had now doubled his crime and most considerable with an already furious and set jury, few steps away, in addition to his being caught with a little red boy who at the time was of an endangered race in the time being.

'This man; he had pushed only to shut him up'.

In no time, Ahamefula is seen out, but this time fast sailing a super redmen type canoe from that ship, on a quick sail far westwards like say he was sailing into the Jo territories.

He had hidden the boy with him and sailed quickly for their both survival, though heart broken for his loss, -his goods and his own canoe all left behind just this way after many years of growth in the booming palm trade.

Again, he as well understands that though he may not be pursued as it seemed he was truly headed for the highly aversed territories of the Jo, that, that however, never still guarantees over his total dissemination if ever seen anywhere at the bights estuaries and so he never will be setting foot ever on any area of these sea borders that personally in it's fear, now holds against him, unforeseen consequence.

Broken and confused, Ahamefula runs to Aboh, his uncle's place of work which was closest upwards from the creeks past, into Orimiri-Ogbaru - 'the Niger river'.

## CHAPTER TWO

Sighted from afar, walking and finding paths through numerous sailed-off canoes out of the jammed river mouth, by whole lots of several other sailing canoes, affecting a smooth sail, in and along this river market that stretches into the upper body, Ahamefula can never be mistaken by his uncle, Obasi, whom had long taken in hand the both responsibilities of being a father and husband to Ahamefula and his bewidowed mother, no matter how far the distance he gets sighted from.

Just like his nephew, he is firm and fiercely handsome in look and in height average, except of being very fair in complexion; as fair as the day's bright shine in which reverse Ahamefula was, perfectly dark and glowing like a chocolate sun, just like his own father- Okoroafor.

Nevertheless, unlike young Ahamefula and as expectedly assumed of all Aro person, Obasi never kept beard and since last he had it on was his day of entry into his new village, in the defunct Idu-Benin terrain, all through where his preferably called Orisa and Olise respectively along the north and south of that Orimiri-Igbo as identified by the Igbos across that great river to the east, in same way as it is, with the northernmost geographic pole of them, the Enugu or Elugu-Igbo, -as pronounced in the dialect of the southernmost of them.

Okoroafor was his elder brother and a very wealthy man; however, the story of his voluntary abandonment of Aro to naturalizing with his new people, remains a story to be told. Then, Ahamefula was but only a boy of ten of age.

On sailing past the Jo territorial creek-paths up for Orimiri, Ahamefula had come pondering on the many odds that the path held in consequential concernment to the load he carried.

This he didn't worry of, in the sense that he wasn't Aro enough that his safe passage wouldn't be a guarantee, respected anywhere even if he ply's through the most hostile areas, nor that he wasn't dark enough plying through new Kalabar. Rather, it was but for the red boy who if caught in danger of people who may regard him product of high commodity may become the end of him and for this issue, Ahamefula worried so much that in the end, he did find a lasting solution which was the cutting to bald the red boys attracting fur hair that can only be the really outstanding thing to differ him from a true indigene, amongst who have very red, fair and even albino skinned people.

Now, Ahamefula gladly meets his uncle who in turn was emerging off his canoe factory to give him a warm embrace.

At this point in time, he kept calm all traces of a possible notice of his restless emotion in his hug exchange with Obasi. But until they had gone into his factory that again the outward nature of his shivery and emotiveness to his impatience of avoiding fears unknown came into full display.

This time, he made his unending persuasion towards Obasi, who he now wants to follow home.

However, not withstanding Ahamefula's unsophisticated nor convincing reasons, on why exactly Obasi who is generally known for his rigidity of returning home only on the last end of each four market days, that is of the week, should go with him on that Afor market day being the third. On sensing serious fears in Ahamefula, Obasi yielded to his unexplained nor convincing fears, and before time, their both canoes was already on its way around the waters through Agbor, from where farther westwards, they sailed deep into Benin's defunct Idu territory.

This time, it was already evening and night was falling very quickly.

Having arrived home, both men at the lead of Obasi heads for his obu; - rest house.

On the part of Ahamefula, long he had been carrying upon his head an empty oil-palm drum, filled with an unforeseen solid property, probably what he must had purchased newly, beginning from the new fast-canoe of the redmen's type he had come with, -but, who stores goods in an unwashed oil-drum.

Efe, Obasi's last girl child from his fourth wife had come welcoming both his father and particularly Ahamefula who she had known a bit long while still a kid, before going back into the kitchen area 'where most of the other women were gisting and some from the second wives own family, preparing their collective dinner', to get her father and Ahamefula water from a chilled fridge drum.

Now, for the first time dropping that oil-palm drum, Ahamefula sits as well as Obasi, quickly after they stepped into the obu. This time, unsatisfied, Obasi began throwing heavily on Ahamefula all his mind disturbing questions.

Tell me Aham; he began. Firstly, you and I know for sure that like yourself -at this very time, 'a toad running in the hot afternoon', that it's either after something or something somewhere is after it.

So now you must tell me Ahamefula, why have you come this far, what is it that is pursuing you, Ahamefula tell me. What is it that you are in pursuit of, Obasi asked insistently.

'This time, Efe comes into the Obu', disturbing the room with her distractions of pouring out the chilled water into two respective cups.

Again, Obasi begins his endless questions one more time, the very moment Efe stepped off the Obu. Again, he began, your new canoe, and the redmen's type oil palm turner drum, very different from ours; tell me Ahamefula what is it really that you had feared and have been running from.

Nnam: Ahamefula calls Obasi father. Seated firm and upright, Obasi observes his strength gathering to initiate a perfect reply to all his numerous questions of concern and on his notice of Ahamefula, taking all the time that he can to let out words, his difficulty and evident pains-endured, Obasi as a result decided to remain calm instead, as so to let Ahamefula pour out all it was that troubled him.

Nnam, he called again, after a stretched while and slowly this time, he then began a careful outlay of his story as best as he taught wise it should be, and the things and things not to be included nor excluded in it's narration.

I have done great sin father, he begins. I have sinned against God and against my fellow man; but how ignorant of them, how great is my sin to my good act, he added subtly.

Again, I fear, 'he continued'. I may or may not be pursued, but he that is surrounded by enemies as we say must guard himself and so why I run.

I run for my own safety and another whom I have lost so much for. But if you consult an Afa and he says treachery, tell him that am never treacherous, and will never be. And if another says murder, tell them that it's my sin to war and that I have headed for Aro where I will make sin offerings. However, if the later, surely, I cannot tell what came over me, how dumb that I had been, Ahamefula said taking a deep breath.

Nonetheless, at his repeatedly mentions of treachery, war and murder,



Obasi was already confined in his mind, struggling from emerging heart flips heavily ready to unveil itself, as he in turn wondered in disappointment how a son who he had raised by his own self, on his own standards will end up still repeating the disgusts of his ill father, that had in decades past, brought with it the long stayed ills that had befallen their great family, since and after his shameful execution.

Ahamefula, on his own part had remained as subtle and calm as he can in out laying this troubles, knowing very well his uncle's rage and health.

In the time being however, Obasi mumbled out few words asking; 'havent we done enough treachery already?'.

Ahamefula continues.

You shouldn't really trouble about me, I have no guilt nor blame of my own. I have done nothing as you may be exaggerating only that the later stories of Bonny and what became after the war in Opobo you may come to be hearig later of, that even I can make you proud. And though a sinful Aro in war, I was no part to the later barbarism in Bonny and that alone when you start hearing this stories, you can look back and be proud of this one you raised, in good standards.

Like a child, Ahamefula exempt's himself from all links of guilt, knowing fully well that in no time and in Aboh particularly, which is always in endless communications between it and all Orimiri linked economy, including the now striving Bonny, from where it's river empties into the great sea, would soon be hit by different and even many exaggerated and water washed stories accounting to all that had happened in the last few days, and why also the red men still trading in Bonny had come not to be found anywhere in the bight, ever since.

Also, he knows 'his-story', told of a man of his description, suspected to be an Aro in war, which many will argue will surely also surface.

Ahamefula then choose exempting himself in total and if now possible, dropping the young Stewart as he had come for as so to go reorganise his own life quickly before returning for him, after his families own share of this new boy's knowledge.

Nevertheless, he knows he shouldn't be anywhere around a detective question loving Obasi any longer time and must surely give remarkable time-space, before his return when the trend must have ended and the news probably dead and no news anymore.

Now, while Ahamefula ended his talk and successfully calmed Obasi from supposed inevitable shock, he now rose to the oil-palm drum and uncovered it and to the awe of his uncle and father, Obasi, emerges the half view of a soft looking child, legendary looking like Agbara, but unlike him, uncommonly fair looking in complexion, un-alike in his own skin tone, fairer and most particularly more differently looking and just like the reds with a weak pulp skin which can get torn by anything not too soft; this boy was not just 'normal', in anyway to be from around here regardless his not neatly shaved hair that still had visible furs on it, confusing the old man.

This entire suspicion, already provoking Obasi to his bone-marrow, remained a mist of his confused state, in his inspection, on how Ahamefula got hold of another man's child; what justification of good is he going to lay out now and smile on his not being in the steps of Okofofor -'as pronounced in this area', as he had claimed earlier, and considering his coming to him in this matter, to disclose a kidnapped victim, instead of finding a black market nearby, from where he had started his journey, if truly he must have involved into this generational act of iniquity.

Doesn't he look like my own; Agbara, -'the great ancestor'. Ahamefula asked in his usual praise of his son, with a wide smirk, as he always do, while referring to that name -Agbara.

To this, it remains always and all the time, all about the birth of Agbara, who born with dreadlocks, still remain, a thing of great unbelieve and honour to Ahamefula, that ever since the time of his birth that he smiles on each occasion of a flash back on how he felt for himself on that memorable day, remembering how unbelieving he felt for himself 'a son of a sinful Okofofor, instead of being tormented with an Ogbanje, got gifted all the goods that opposes an Ogbanje, -'as this beings', are all that opposes Ogbanje and all of its characteristics. In this same honour, none of this breeds ever have their dreads put to the razor, but only dressed and neatly trimmed.

Their carriers are regarded persons of great ancestral reincarnations which became why Ahamefula reformed the usual name Nwa-Agbara which meaning the child of angel's' that Abaka, a judge and a family friend from his clan and many who came to felicitate with him, on that day of his wife's first birth -had suggested following their old priest and friend whose son was as well blessed in equal manner and in it's honour

called same name as well as being specially talented. Ahamefula instead, reversed this name to just Abgara, just the way his excitement pushed him that very day.

I hid him; he is an Oyibo. Ahamefula quickly jumps to speak healthy, in relation to the frightened boy, before he begins his down-listing of the boys tragic story, who truly is not from there, and an Oyibo- 'the name Oyibo, which name had emerged from this world part with the redmen's over obsession with acquiring an Igbo slave, man or woman, at any presented cost, being the most wanted and expensive of them all, valued for reasons best known to them, that though endless rebellions and unwillingness to blend, still didn't end these obsession and so, in their uncountable times of continual asking 'onye Igbo' meaning 'is he/she Igbo', in their own best possible pronouncement as oyi-lbo, which now evolved to become the across board and not yet \_ endless name - Oyibo in replacement to their general identity.

I knew his father. Ahamefula continues, and his father knew me also, including the boy, and we did business together, he said and paused for a while, studying Obasi's facial reaction.

It's a sad thing, he started again; but the captain, my friend and business partner, being the boys father is dead now, 'murdered in the later tales of Bonny you do be appreciating when the news start coming that if sinful in anyway, that I had sinned to take this boy alive, now as his only living father and protector, from where his people fell victim to death's cold hands, that, that day I did promise to keep him alive, now as his last guardian.

However, he continues; I came that you please first keep him for me as I journey to set myself up, to this now staring challenge and responsibility before me.

I have lost my entire enterprise, Ahamefula begins to lament and in the securing of this young lad in its consequence, I am only faced with starting from afresh.

Now, Ahamefula sits and continues wailing to his helplessness. And in it's reciprocate, Obasi rose to behold a full description of the lad's beauty and respect to his tragic past.

Now it came to pass; there and then, Obasi called him Nwa-Ubani, meaning 'child of Ubani'.

The morning later, the entire household including his mother -Ngozi, had ever since, held him in her arms, with the rest, gathered round to see Ahamefula, who on his own side held Nwaubani, as they gisted happily, spending good times together once again.

His step brothers were also present, except for Chima, who had just been sent by Obasi, to go send for Osadebe, a man who in the week past, proposed his visiting, after the market day, supposedly on the day before the rest day by which time Obasi, -'his business partner who he supplies with ivories from his factory in Aba, which Obasi and his counterparts use in making luxurious and majestic canoes for sale', would be home.

The year was almost at it's end and this last month as he said, 'he would be spending with his family in Aba and would not return due to five of his servants, whose dues are to be, cause it was the seventh year, and their last year of service.

He would be returning in no time and so in addition to Ahamefula's plight, Obasi had invited him now that above their business discuss that he too may come to discuss, some favours from their long lived business relationship.

Soonest, Chima came calling Ahamefula.

He had been summoned to Obasi's Obi - 'visitors palour', situated at the centre of the compound, while Osadebe having arrived, was alongside Obasi, already discussing their both business benefits from the other.

Nevertheless, as a father in this charge, Obasi has achieved in the least possible time and opportunity, what is supposed of every father to providing the child a thing doing, from where one's life earning may at least begin.

In Ahamefula's case, it was really lucrative -a trade in ivory.

His going to begin anew, since he had agreed to. And though the man had decided he started from the year later as so to make a properly calculated service year, he rather still asked to just start already, with no worries at all, if few more months, get spent freely in his service years.

His to begin in no time as it was in old times and new, his apprenticeship, trading, service and otherwise business, and in the final agreement, he will be leaving with Osadebe the week later.

On that very day, as Ahamefula fared goodbye to a now confused Nwaubani, Nwaubani fell into deep sobbing and weeping after which Obasi came comforting him in his arms.

### CHAPTER THREE

Weeks after, Ahamefula had begun work in Aba, 'the city of elephants' -Enyimba, where ivories are harvested after its hunt and meats made off its remains.

For two months now, since in service, Ahamefula had managed out of his already learned experience in trade dealings to win favour from Osadebe his boss, that this days, he had become the one man who frequents Igala to trade with its people and with the peoples coming further from the Sahelian parts of its arid territories. However, here he had become stucked up in, following his ultra rejection over all beautiful attempts to take him down the shores, where supposedly he should be, dealing with the oversea redmen.

Nonetheless, all his trade experiences in ivory, as well, got all growing rigidly in a northward association.

In this light, Ahamefula had as well, managed the purchase of a young black cow and two bird-fowls, with which he plans to set for home on a leave agreed between himself and his boss, that he may go visit his clansmen and family and if in the later's choice, bring them to stay alongside himself, considering his small household, and if his wife so wishes.

Nevertheless, the cow he had bought for carrier of his surplus luggages and the birds for possible revert of his funeral, -'a ritual to its revoke', following his fears of recent, since the month, after the weeks past reach of the Bonny's massacre story all over the news in Aba, that he feared must have as well gotten all over Arochukwu, and his people and clansmen in particular, worrying for many among them who trade that path, that in so doing and maybe from regular reports from equal merchants like himself from Aro, who may be frequenting Bonny only to return with news of finding no one like himself, may bring fear amongst his clans men that he as well may have been a victim of that unfortunate occurrence -thus the necessity of his return.

Many years ago, since the early days of Okoroafor, -Ahamefula's father, the metamorphosed evolution of villages and later towns which now became the uncontrollable highly booming and endless expanding city of Aba in its vicinity had currently become a thing of concern and study to the endless perils its development had brought amongst other smaller indigenous villages, separated from their larger bodies, faced against



this it's endless spread and continual over-cover.

It all began many years ago, following the self exit of a people amongst the Aro's -the Efiks first 'wide emigration', which history has become watered in time and if any 'hand pointer' can tell, would be pointing at the begins of widely uncontrollability of the Aro's in their involvement in trade, and their later corrupting in this taste of wealth, following the worst of them, being the head-on involvement in the cursed equity-waiting ill -abduction and sale of a fellow being, that so much, they rode in with their already privileges, added to Igbos unexplainable nature of exeptionalism in whatsoever opportunity, that this originated their today's 'most faced iniquities', that being against the old books of law itself, which Aro holds office of, making theirs, an exceptional case to had ever gotten involved, as early as the international trades faced north.

Aba; a city that shares no great room in the bights estuary's great sea, other than Azumini, and the many rivers that joins it up, as it is with every other river to the sea, but outstands very many in the country, that its competent standing rivals remained Asaba, Onitsha and Igala -all in similar geographical state with it, and further inwards, then Aboh where the biggest canoes seen anywhere in the country are made.

However, it's becoming a city began from this Efiks exist and reciprocating reactions of several influx of people from all directions that began its rise, into a mega-town, then city, beginning from the Ogbor hills where the Owerri's Imo river receives it's hill two-path seperating river, channeled down to the remains of the village's of Opobo, afterwards, for the 'great sea' -Oke Orimiri, where it empties.

Around this channel path ways, resides the Igbo village -Opobo, whose other half had been among them, whose name had become over headed and over covered, under that of a growing mega-city -Aba.

Then, the isolated centres had opened vacuums for all the first big waves and even among its own surrounding indigenous villages, being the Etches, -a half of it's own as it's with the Opobo's, the Opobo's and the Ngwa's, who make the greatest of their numbers, being one of the biggest Igbo-clans, came flocking in, into this beautiful geographic vaccum, and now almost like this close indigenes, the Abiriba's, an age old sworn Aro ally, blessed with hands of smith working, whose integrated smith talent had let them so deep all around Opobo that one

may mistake these parts as now becoming as well, these indigenous off their own separated parts.

At its prime and in its far reaching distributions of ivory, long before the coming of the southwards market-face turn, and the redmen it resulted with; -amongst the Arabs, 'men from continents way far', past the beyond of the deserts, got into their maps its recognition as the elephant city in connection with its level of ivory production, over all other peoples of the continents west. In this map, two heavy elephants are shaded to its thick.

Nevertheless, times later, its growing market also attracted other services including cash crops among which includes oil-palms and yams, which the Ngwas being good farmers and in possession of the one land whose fertility is only beaten by the land of the peoples of Ezza, and their Effium offshot, further north-east territorial Igbo boarder. However, meat production highly remained its leading role after the ivories, and this ivories as well as horns excavated off cattles and elephants are respectively done in it's slaughter, situated right in the heart of Ogbor-hill, where this animals are slaughtered at its two sides divided below by the passing river where men wash themselves off the bloods and as well wash the meats cut off these beasts, besides heavy risen roasting smokes.

In this case, Aba never had a welcoming sing-poster and so, coming around, from the sight of the heaps of waste cattle horns -'having no economic relevance', hovered round by uncountable vultures, hovering its many hipped pyramids and pigs and other unclean and uneaten beasts lurking round the area, automatically informs one of their arrival into the city and became the best description of the vicinity if one asks.

Notwithstanding, Ahamefula having purchased this cattle, he had since planed to set for his village clans area, where some old women who saw him came by pouring sprinkles of sands to confirm whether it was still him or merely a mirage or a spirit of himself that they were witnessing.

His wife, Oluoma had as well come by on sighting him and his two daughters with all the kids they were playing with came also hugging him in welcome, except Agbara his first born child and only boy child who surely in this his abscent, either had gone squirrel hunting, swimming or most particularly, for his frequent evening wrestling.

It was a cool evening and soonest Oluoma had served him an appetizer,

an African salad -Abacha, that she hurriedly prepared and Ahamefula ate carrying Chidimma, 'his last girl child' on his left lap.

How about Agbara, where must he have been this time; Ahamefula asked of Agbara's whereabouts and in return Oluoma automatically reversed this concern, and in this avenue, began pouring out all of his stubborn behaviours throughout his periods of absence.

Now, while the both discussed on Agbara's Ahamefula obstinate like nature, -led by his pet dog, Agbara came walking into the compound. Looking all over him, its simply obvious from his appearance the places he must had been and the many tales that will soon be coming from it. And observing below his knees and his sandy hair, he obviously must had gone wrestling and many times had been fallen.

Mindless, just after his greeting, the both knew what's next of it, as they patiently listened to his legendary tales of how his group had beaten greatly all the other people, -a story only Ahamefula enjoys and smiles at as he kept hailing him, repeatedly cheering, -'legend like his father'.

For the kids that had welcomed him through, he had given bread he had bought on his way back and asked that they greet their parents on his behalf, telling of his return regardless his knowing fully well that among the parents of all those kids, that some friends, on merely telling this to them will automatically bring them visiting his house the next day.

The costly cow is about to go the meat way, and as it is, no one can do nothing about it.

It may even begin ripe, as early at sun rise, that just like a newly married couple or young family making its home attract a free-load of helping hands from neighbours who seek no pay in return other than a traditionally expected merry provision of drinks and things of the kind and such assistance also applies in times of grief, when graves are dug for the dead.

Early that morning, already, Nwachukwu and Ogbu had started challenging themselves on whose best, and better than the other when it comes to the things of the kitchen, and it's maneuver.

For Ogbu, even he had claimed that his own mother had no girl child and thus no way after many years of being 'man in the kitchen' only for Nwachukwu to cook very better than himself, while Nwachukwu on the other hand, who owns a bar, taps fine wines and prepares all kinds of

assorted bush meats by himself, where so many people full to their fill, mostly after returning from markets or on the day later after the market days both young and old alike, many coming with their wives and others with their betrothed or girlfriends respectively, all testifying to his good hands went further to initiating a bet, that instead, they cut the cow into halves that in so doing, to judge for themselves -the best cook between.

While they fought still, Nnamdi on his own side, whose uninterrupted focus remained the ultra completion of the firewood logs with which the cow would be roasted upon, and a hole in the ground for it's blood first cut, after it's slaughter and butcher, being his most personal focus, as once a teenage, who used to go hunting and roasting with his eldest cousin. While on Ahamefula's side, he had kept laughing at both of the other men, catching cruise by the show, that he enjoyed alongside the kids as they mopped at the two old men, that time after time, he ignites more confusion between them, supporting one after the other with playful verbal attacks.

From outside, Oluoma who brought them firewoods came calling out the men's stinginess who as usual would not call on their wives to enjoin for a better preparation of the women's tasty hands, rather they will struggle to do all that concerns meat roasting and cooking so long as it concerns goats, and this other fat animals, like the cow, already being set with.

In no less time, when the cow's roasting began by Nnamdi, and the men sat on their rest chairs and shared palm wine and when talks got serious, Ahamefula's friends, considering his story came advising him of Kalabar -'the old', to at least, switch trade line, than starting a seven year anew, but Ahamefula still won't yield to these convictions, surely because, they three do not know the entirety of his story and risks which awaits his life and even freedom in punishment of this perceived kidnap, the fallen man that they still do not know about, whether or not, he had survived his push.

## CHAPTER FOUR

Very early the next day, by five o'clock in the morning, the thundering sound of an ikoro is heard playing from afar, surely from the direction of the village square, which closest road path leads into the areas where most of Ahamefula's kinsmen and Ahamefula himself live, - thus, the closeness and soundness of this particular ikoro, heard so loudly in that part of Aro's community.

The ikoro played repeatedly and so loud that all hearing it had woken in result of it's disturbing effect on their sleeps, that even in a state of subconsciousness, one still got pulled into the follow of it's rythm.

Ahamefula had been fully woke by its second play and all at once as one who had since his year of incorporation, been active in things of state interest. He listened carefully at it's repeated play, and quickly got afterwards, a quick decide of what message that it passed.

'In the call, the ikoro announced of an urgent meeting, to be held at the village square by sunrise'.

Later by sunrise, the square was already filled to brim, by over a thousand people, men and women, youths and kids included. The entire place filled by other Arochukwu's farther communities, who had all come from wide and near for that particular meeting.

Earlier on, Ahamefula had handed a stool to Agbara, who is yet to have his breakfast, but beheld to, over the more important Ahamefula's obstinate ambition on grooming him in his own steps to follow, that he may be but in a life track never to go his grandpa's way and again like many others, that if the square's stepped sitting auditorium had been filled already, by people who either had come so early or live so very close to the square, that he wouldn't stand as a result, but sit on this stool, same way several others who live farther do, mostly old people.

On the women's part, Oluoma and her little girls were rushing their breakfast she had prepared and so to quickly join her fellows and not being a victim of hearsay in such great gathering. At each time they see people wave-past their flower-fence, they become more in a hurry to finish.

In the square, and any other temporal fields, used for the purpose of the kind of this meetings, big and small, the face of all its sittings resides always at the table of the highly positioned representatives in

that unique government.

However, if in cases of this crowd gathering and in a larger field and squares possessing a much bigger auditorium or perhaps a small member or community meeting in a field even not the general square, where the auditoriums may be mere benches fixed to the ground, their sitting gets set sometimes at the centre.

However, these rep's in this Arochukwu particular case, begins from Azuka who is; the Okpara-Eze, being the high-priest of the holy city and government. Eziokwu, who by heritage and position is the beholder of the oldest ancestral staff -the offor and head of its families living heir and Chief. Abaka, the Chief judge of Arochukwu, then Ogbokiri the women leader and representative of the Umuada, whose unique reign unlike her predecessors had become her greater lawful and customary position as not just a woman but as well a man, in a man's position and offering equal responsibilities, following her youthful decision after her father's accidental death, who was the only surviving heir, and last bearer of the ancestral name of their family, to had left that way, abominably to his ancestors, without leaving, even an adopted heir, 'to carry on the existence of their name at least, though not onto his bloodline, but to remain on the surface of this earth'. However, he left in his death two girl children -to be married out and bear names of their new families. Nonetheless, it became that Ogboriki who was first of the two daughters on her kinsmen advice, decided into the huge step of sacrifice, to remain unmarried and following rituals to become the next man of the house, and keep incontinuity, the life of that almost lost lineage which came to end to a first twin boys delivery. This popularity followed by her known story of sacrifice, regardless the excessiveness of her beauty and quality of the suitors that had come for her hand in marriage, became what lasted her through, and what she's got known for all her life-through that the day she did contest for the office of the leader of the Umuada, her already popularity and pre-knowledge of one able to make sacrifices, got her all the women's vote unopposed, even against major contestants whose vote hope rested on equals, married outside of the village, but all to no avail.

Nevertheless, while 'eze' like 'ike' in the Igbo plurality, which planely stands for strength, energy, and anus as well, in a more stressed pronouncement, and 'Eze' for king, priest and teeth in a stressed pronouncement alike, and mindless the Igbo character that no man is and can be king —'madu-abu-chi', 'Igbo-enwe-Eze' —Igbo has no king and



as they answer in their names, 'Sochibueze' —only God is king, the other woman present at the high table was Nnenna, the Eze; Eze-Nwanyi, being head Priestess of Aro-Ngwa.

In this places of decision, each person of the community, even in their absence is wholly represented. Primarily starting from one of their own unit, beginning from the presence of his own father, who naturally is the head of his family, to his own father then to their clans head and holder of the clans oldest Offor, from it's oldest household and hierarchy. And even in the most unhealthy occasions particularly with the men, whom it have proven always to be running down upon, the shouldering of this world's toughest responsibilities and sufferings, even in most detorating circumstances of security and wars, still yet, every single citizen happens to be represented in every of this occasions whether present or not.

However, unlike farther monarchical neighbour countries, the vote ground was both open for both sexes, particularly adults. 'A most ancient, most direct people's government.'

When an Okpara of a particular clan or of the oldest clan of which Eziokwu is a part, young or old dies, his next heir takes his office, but when he does without an heir, the Offor gets handed over to the next clan in line, to it's most senior family and oldest heir regardless his age. And if too young an older member takes the temporal position.

In this case, Eziokwu remain a living reference. That though not too young when he ascended to this only existing governing inheritance among the Igbos, until it passes from one clan to a new, or among those that keep its office on rotational bases, Eziokwu however, had got in early into this office and ever since, till this very day, had been ruling with people way older than himself.

Asides the Chief's and the judges that occupies vital positions in the society, these were the people's most representatives when it comes to farther meetings where everyone cannot attain that even if it was very little thing of such requirements then amongst them, or the greater people, selections may, and are made amongst themselves and temporal representatives are appointed for this purposes, which position doesn't out live it's purpose.

Age long, the Aros, beginning from their incoming and piece by piece refuge settlements all from the ways up north following kinds like the

Ujari's, the Aro Ugwu-akuma, Aro Ndi-Ikechukwu, Aro Okpala Eze's and more others, they were but only a sect of priestly serving people whose only dedication lived on this services of temples and pilgrims and its kind, and their survival on the offerings of numerous people of the other non-priestly clans.

However, in times coming, when the people were only in a subunit, out of the Aro-Akpa's, being the priest groups and temple serving groups and families as they all were, then came off them -the whole, another, the Aro -Ali's in later ages past, being the farming Aro's then the Aro-Afia's being the trading Aro's that began from the generations of Okorafor's own father, when the Arab market started gaining more deep trade influence, which consequently remains a traceable origin to all their days sufferings of the sins of their ancestors.

The meeting had begun with a usual fore-speaker, -Ikokwu, following his continual and loud chants, drawing close attention from the crowd, to a subsequent ultra silence, in his second chant -che che che Igbo kwenu and this time more people responded for the second, yah. Che che che - again he chanted, for the third and last time; Igbo mma mma nu oh and in unison all the people replied ehheh...!!

Ikeokwu walks to Eziokwu in the high table and took from him a tray full of kola nuts and passed to a younger man, who as expected, took it up and passed to Azuka, not on his position as the eldest in the gathering as it's supposed, but on the bases of his office. Then afterwards, Azuka himself now raised the kola and his offor and in the Igbo prayer way, made declarations of goodwill upon the kola and all the things of life that it represents -then began it's breaking and sharing.

'Since it is life, and one who brings kola brings life and goodwill wishes it's come with, it is therefore expected that everyone must not be left away and so must to have at least a little share of his own kola, no matter how little, and though all outstanding representatives had taken on the behalf of their people, still on, due to the excessive crowd that had gathered, heavy loads of garden eggs were brought on in support, blessed upon and all together, it's enjoined sharing'.

Now on this fulfilment, every meeting and this, has automatically, officially begun.

'Truth is life'. Eziokwu had started, stating a philosophy of the root guidance of the people's life, just as his name implied. He also made few

other usual remarks he does make, most times while beginning a discussion even though these things are in no way related to the matters on ground – ‘remember history and note also that anyone who have come for a long time run should also come with clean hands’ – he said afterwards, with few introductions making and laying of the meetings foundations, then handed over to Nnenna, the priestess of Aro-ngwa; the affected Aro-village who had narrated their challenging problems which as well was to the breach of all Aro’s sovereignty and respect. Afterwards, she had left the stage for Azuka, who now started speaking in greater audibility, in the mode and situation of the kind, most understood by the people of Arochukwu, -a cry in lamentations.

Years ago, 'Azuka had begun in his words of laments', into the minds and hearts of the people. Udo an old friend of mine he continued, had visited from 'Ekpemiong' and while we discussed, he started telling of the good old days. Those days which most of our youngs did not witness, nor had been privileged like those before them, a glimpse of what glory Aro procured and the presence of God in the Lord's own City.

However, he continued, this days, amongst the wider people of Aro, who today get looked a bit in dishonour, in result of what bad we have become, soonest, this ill fate may as well come knocking on the door steps of those of us in Arochukwu. That even on issues of mere travelling past disturbed areas, that an Aro would also have to make white chalk marks of peace in assuring his safe passage.

My people, Azuka raises his voice further, how long before we regain what our fathers and men of our own age had lost just few decades ago and the centuries before them respectively. At least, why can't it just be restored better, or just as we met it and if for nothing for this young ones at least, to hand to them a sane place to continue after we all die.

Now, re-mediate the priestess grief and weep, and weep for this evil. But still, for how long shall we remain upon this level, that we now get breached and the boldness that follows it's accomplishments, for how long - Azuka asked.

When he ended, the entire people wailed and lamented in high voices and spirit, looking up to heaven, lamenting and wallowed aloud on their befallen shame.

During the many age's ago of the 'first-of-men', in the later times when the Aro's in whole, in their totality alongside other later clans of

sambartyon, at the equator, before the later ancient marriage that they became one; the Aro's who being but only a priestly clan were assigned no inheritances, other than pastures to make own inheritances and dwelling places, that over many years of stay, turned into units and then villages of which this wide land areas became. Long and later notwithstanding, here in this villages resides the synagogues and earth alters respectively, in accordance to the sizes of the territory either a village or unit which housed altars, while Arochukwu in particular, which housed the temple itself, later evolved into a city with numerous incomers from several villages and tribe's, and in turn as the place of pilgrim, and Aro's Confederal central government, being an only existing confederation inside an overall republic and confederate.

"There is Aro in Ekpemiong, being Aro-Ekpemiong. There's also Aro-Ndizogu being Aro in Izuogu and in simple terms as its name applies, - the Aro people of Izuogu. There is Aro-Ikwere located further south from Arochukwu and there also lives Aro-Ndiokuzu and to the Orimiri areas across the Niger, a defunct Aro presence whose reputation dwelled so largely, during the reputable generation of Eze-Chima, whose continual existence remains in the living generations of his remains -the last existing of the territories priestlies, the Umu-Chima's; being the Children and descendants of Chima".

Nonetheless, most Aro communities in this existence, were and lived further north, where the peoples first met and gathered, living side by side when Uzo Ndi Igbo -'the road leading to the Igbo areas', was highly of great reference and highlight, until the great begin of the prophecy of ancient, in the synergy, \_after their greater integration and further inward push and intermingling, starting with this Eri's led party to the 'ancients', with this inevitable unit, 'Owerri', meaning the area of Eri, joined in one unit, in the very central of the territory -Igbo, and sat side by side to the very ancient ancestral compound and community -Ama Igbo.

However, of all this, Aro-Ngwa in the past month had become a victim of circumstance and the continual breach of its sovereignty, and also endangering those among who run into her in seek of refuge, that so, Aro needs to act quick on an equal pay back against its perpetrators that so others may learn from and that a repeat may never again occur.

The repeated incident as narrated by the priestess -the Okpara-Ezenwanyi of Aro-Ngwa, according to her testimonies had occurred twice before, but in limited stand, that there still existed some semblance of

sanity and fear of the Lord's village among its perpetrators, but until the third, that broke the camels back, when this attacking mobs conquered their sacred fear and respect, to had pursued into her, a people who had run from that dark riot, into Aro's hand for refuge as its been in the old and new, as equal as when one runs to his mothers people -ikwu nne, for refuge, that he must not be harmed upon, untried and unlawful.

Nevertheless, it still remains their fears which was an Igbo mans greatest, to be lost, and ones lineage go into extinction, being the total opposite of the value and philosophy, 'Ahamefula', which states, 'may my name never go extinct. This riots had begun few years back but very weak until the fall of Opobo, under the much bigger name -Aba, as the cities expansion overran the village and its people that the never again became a village nor did its name like the ones before her, raise its head again, while referred to, or identified outside Aba. This time, the fears became not of development, which can never be an Igbo's fear but admiration, but that of going the oblivion way, absorbed off this earths surface.

However, these riots had begun, merely as a campaign few years back, and their only vexation were on perils if possibly can become, remains what no Igbo ever will easily tolerate, being against the name and philosophy, Ahamefula -'may my name not go extinct', 'the extinction of himself, name, and identity -thus inexistence. However, it all began very weak and unpopular, as it was never driven on anti-development and urbanization, but the unbelievable over cover, of the name of a particular village with an outstanding name, in this generation wherest it's name had become a reference to it's other path, joining just by the river flow where all of Aba sailed through Azumini to trade directly with the Europeans and later, the Jaja's middle men, that like a burning fire, Aba's expanse had over covered this village -Opobo and now, extending past Ngwa-road, sporadic protests turned riots by fanatics of these small villages seperated from it's larger bodies, for it's name getting infused by a mere young growing city.

Notwithstanding, for the Aro's, they had taken a stand and after a general vote was let open, the overwhelming people wanted punishment, assigning this want upon the channeled responsibility of the central representatives who will now choose amongst the clans, people who will go for the beckon of the Edah's, the Abam's, Abiriba's and the Ohafia's; 'a part of the Abiriba's whose village boards the next second walk outside Ohafia', and in their both origin, being one people in almost same

cover, except their philosophies slight-distancing, as the Ohafia's became much war excited and extreme after their final peace attainment of their new sojourn, whilst the Abiriba's, whose name un-hiddedly tells 'New-comers', preferred business instead, having been overtaken in their smiths, as the greatest in the entire south, and works of bronze like those from the farther Benin far west. However, on the people's disapproval of Abiriba whom they insistently believe, that being almost situated indigenes inside the troubled territory, thus softened for a fight, -not to be included that they also may be, parts and parcel of the happenings in Aba and its surroundings, for the possibility of that emboldened action to have invaded Aro.

A cast had been made and the reps had disbanded for a later assembly, the next day in Eziokwu's place.



## CHAPTER FIVE

When Ahamefula was informed by Abaka, that he had been selected, so he should find his fate in this popular expedition, Ahamefula had become so glad within, that he couldn't interpret his joy anymore to Abaka nor anyone else that even now, since nightfall after he had left Oluoma's room, upon their discussion on the amusing topic; ever since and through the midnight following, Ahamefula had continually and endlessly woken over a third time, impatient for daybreak's cock crow.

Notwithstanding, his only unliking thing on the entire meeting and adventure was their gathering in Eziokwu's own place, and obi, where they would all now sit side by side, very close to the other and Eziokwu in particular, looking in all of their faces, whenever he chooses to pour his boasts of old memories.

When that time came, he happened to be walking few steps backwards, as so to become among the last persons to sit, thus who would be sitted, very far from the fifty nine years old man.

Walking into Eziokwu's compound was like walking into that of a king, as testified by many, who had travelled far and wide to countries where kings reign -that all in their affirmations they keep saying aloud, that Eziokwu lived just like a king.

His obi alone which faced the long trees canopy branches, 'covering from both sides, the walk-through the wide road path into his compound', was as much the size of a mid-hall and could occupy a double dozen people sitted, and another dozen standing. His rest house was a raised story mud house, which was what the country built with, considering it's weather and the chill nature of the mud cements and plasters. Eziokwu's resthouse was alongside built like a raised room, with an unusual design at its top building, with eight mini bed chambers, made side by side on it's wall corners.

In the entire area and amongst people of his age grade, he had acquired four key wealthy titles, and had had all that is looked upon attributing a wealthy Igbo man, -he still possessed. That having nine wives altogether and eighteen daughters out of his twenty eight children, his wealth never still stopped being replenished that as a wealthy man who attracts equally well wealthy and highly startng youngmen, who all love to take part in his attained glory, name and establishment, -that in equal pursuit by equally well doing families, also enlarges the families class and

statues and that of attempting suitors, thus the unusual bride price pay, \_his old earned wealth keeps getting replenished and lubricated even after his long time retirement, that even with his remaining four unmarried daughters, this artificially toppled brideprice still can keep Eziokwu on minimal or average wealth float for as long as it may last.

His yam barns alone are numerous and very tall, having over eight barns in his house alone, laying a barn after the other in particular sequence, just like his titles and prestige including all the numerous fine hurts standing in his compound, all of which in small and high buildings had highly elevated strong tatch roofs, including his kitchen made seperatly, each for his nine wives and thier families, then his servants, all whose roof were in the mid heights of an average tree in the compound.

Nevertheless, he also had three concubines, several lots of servants, and more, who still applied and worked for his foundation since his retiremenet. He also had great stock of lifestocks with numerous poultries, three adult cattles, a sizeable amount of goats, sheeps and rams, altogether and a white horse, that he never rides, but remained the reign of his pride, evidently as he outly and purposefully made its house very open and almost to the outs of his compounds entrance, after the long canopy-trees covered walkthrough, purposefully letting it and the clear of its colour, press in the sight of all from whose position one must take a glance, regardless the direction through which he enters the compounds frontside.

Old men and men way more older than himself tell the stories that had related to the horse and its hard hit on Eziokwu's psych, that began the origin of his now know character -a boastful character. They said that it all began with the then popular Okoroafor and another, a late Orji, said to had been the two outstanding men who synonymously had travelled far deep the north-most ends, past the country, to become the very first to return in the entirety of Arochukwu, riding a horse to the awe of all who had never seen such a being in their lives.

Among the Igbos, who make for themselves no demigods off anyone, nor fear any man or god in the face of anything, it is popular knowledge that a man can inherit anything of his father and master except the things of the likes of his titles, honours, his achievements, respect and also reputation, that this alone belongs only to the acquirer. And to his children, it is required to achieve for their own selves if at all they can, for such endowments.

However, in these men's case, all being from very wealthy and respected families, -'cause a family is only described wealthy only if wealth exist among it's entire members', all the same, these three young men, were all first heirs after their fathers, but bad as it was, age long competitors since their youths and their wild competitions, only about to take new dimensions following each of their fathers demise and as well, having come from such highly places only placed them that on the ground of mutual respect, became their drives of toppling whatsoever their fathers had accomplished, being the only natural thing anyways, in respect to this classes personal achievement. However, these competition became a fuel on their further drive of craze of wealth and shows of wealth, that they later came to be the days and weeks talk, that no month passes without trends of their beef or money challenges in occasions or in the lips of musicians who when in their praise-forbes making, made along while they sing, praising another in some of these occasions will only attract the money or expensive cloth spray of the other so much that they get to have no control of their voices anymore but begins the forbes -singing of wealth praises and name exhortations of the other.

In time to come, Okoroafor and Orji later became business friends after which they now claimed that their business and trade had by-past from the stages of making and selling fat yams and more fat yams, to another, more highly, wealthier and sophisticated in operation. And sometimes in a subtle degrade overheard from Orji, 'in the sophistication', he added, the incapability to be run by one like Eziokwu.

Nevertheless, the story told that following this men's return, they had made so much jest of Eziokwu's capacities in accomplice to his fat nature, that he became so offended and took a long walk up north, where originally, he had never dealt before, to prove wrong his jest makers, that when he came back dragging along a white horse, the first words of his boast became his claims to had travelled so far, way past Orimiri Omambala and the waters by Igala, into it's lands and past this smaller countries, then further into the hot extremes of the deserts itself, a place way in maximum-gap, hotter than anywhere around, where he met face-to-face with the Arabians of the northern-most people's merchant tales, -and that on his dealings and pre-deals already, that they so much got tempted by the prestige and riches he had brought before them, that if not for the fact that they do not sell those particular beasts, which and that they alone personally ride themselves, that he would had come down with 'them', to the awe of all to see. This rides, he had

described to be fat bellied, very giantic and tall, possessing very long necks -but no one had ever seen such existing beings.

For the horse, the white colour he had acquired to differ from those of Okoroafor and Orji put together.

The next day following, many pretty ladies came gathered and asking - that he showed them how to ride a white horse. But to that ugly incident, Eziokwu never relates in any of his stories ever, of his own horse falling him so badly that ever since, he just only kept it in trophy pose, but never ever climbed upon it again.

'Eziokwu bu ndi'. -One of the selected young men hailed as they stepped into Eziokwu's obi. Looking very closely it was Okonkwo, the man whom he had assisted with a four hundred seedlings of yam, years ago following a rain storm that fell so heavily that it destroyed most of the starting man's seeds that he had already planted, early at the beginning of that raining season.

Now, after kola had been served, the scheduled appointment began and in the end, among the four men, each for all selected clans, Ahamefula got opportuned in the subtle power of Abaka whom long had been a helping hand through his reintegration, got appointed to lead his team and clan on their place of appointment. They were the last of the selected, after the other clans team had been appointed for Edah and Abam respectively, they got hold on Ohafia – all, but a few of Aro's dedicated peoples, south of the country which rests very close to both Arochukwu and Aba respectively.

When the appointments ended and they started sharing palm wine to toasts and merry to every member in the sitting room like say the deed was already done and dusted, Eziokwu had begun a totally new stories narration, beginning with his usual boastful utterances. This one, -he said remained one of why he became among the greatest business tycoons of his time, then, the secret of wealth that worked for his father and men of their time and his time, that he even started an open worrying on why such great secret and business tact of old, tested and proven, is gradually disappearing, in this highly southwards trade face generation, and why so. Of this, he heightened -the business tact and secret strength of man-power.

'In the days of our fathers, he began, and in our days when trade was both north and south simultaneously and wealth was yams and

more yams, oil palms and more oil palms than anything else, one thing that kept the rich richer and the other classes still average was their unwilling nature to sacrifice so much for greater acquisitions of servants and more servants, slaves and even more slaves that many among them, do not even have either a servant, talk more a slave even if he is left with one, after a repel -he said and for a while paused, taking the last sip from his palmwine horn and then pouring another from the wine pot to refill the horn and later handing it over to Okonkwo, seated nearest to him, 'who seemed more interested in his story than the others', to refill his own wine horn.

Then, I must tell you, 'he continued, only the rich made this expensive strives and to the ignorant of many it was a great tact that worked like magic and this is how it was.

While an average young man will but only settle for a second wife, a striving youngman or one from a wealthy family embalmed in this culture and habit of growing in a lage extended family will go for another and another, he will take up titles after titles and gain several knowledge, even more from among and from the discussions of already made old and young men who are members of each peculiar and several title institute that he was a member of, while they discussed and shared wisdom in their meeting and club places, were also becomes his starting place of high connectedness with this already made or aspirers like himself, making new and better gainful friendships and contact exchanges, advices and shared experiences.

On the other most important side also, unlike a man whose wife had become an unfortunate victim of assault, a man whose daughter is rescued from the hand of kidnappers and a braveman who had been given a battle captive after a repel against these slave raiders, to in punishment, now equally serve under this their fellow, in same subjugation, as they intended to unjustly through raids subject a fellow 'mmadu' -human, "meaning 'beauty of life"; \_the least average man will at most keep alone one of this to help in his farm and house, another may seem not interested whatsoever to consume his own food and resources on what his really got no interest for, while the obstinate aspirant or wealthy in play of this tact on the other hand, will come as far as to take more, and even to acquire from the second man his own slave, and now in the whole end and check on the total cycle, on harvest day, the later man's eight wives would give him more children than the wives of the average man and in addition to his endless acquisition of slaves

whose labour is unpaid nor settled after the seventh year, and again in addition with now regular employment of servants, who come drawn by his wealth, into this same seventh, he comes to the possession of a way much larger family, allowing him privileges to own more lands and more yams, foods and all other cashcrops harvest, plus a later inflock of more struggling young men, to plead for his service after witnesses of the first well doings, 'who had past through him', that they as well may get in this share.

Ohafia is a whole people of spartied kind culture and livelihood with villages, patterned in sequence of connected military garrisons whose development had evolved centuries long since years of interference after their exit off defunct Idu, sojourn in Ibeku and later the mangrove forest, that their retain remains surfed into very many battles, after already so many wars, the fall, then displeasing state of search of new unoccupied settlements in that century, along side other people's, like the Umuchima's, also part of that Idu's exodus.

It is said that a first time visitor to its garrisoned wards and villages would severally befall the inescapable temptation of looking over their shoulders in several occasions as so to assure they are not being shadowed. When Ahamefula and his colleagues entered their first Ohafia village, then clan of choice -Ama Ekpu, in its first ward, they had already started to feel in, in this insecurity, and one among them out of uncertainty, was already holding tight to the handle of his fastened waist side machete.

They had come in search of the clans Head-Chief and the other notable Chief's and as directed from the entrance by the road market besides the areas of the village intrance, -Ama Ekpu's head Chief, lives in the third ward. Nevertheless, their special white regalia as Aro emissaries draws so much attention already, that each ward and deep they got in, the more that they got scores of stiring eyeballs, both from without and within these connected hurts. The entire envoriment kept feeling more hostile for them.

Finally, as they had met the head Chief and made little discussions on their visiting purpose, he called for some other Chief's available to come put reasons together with himself, for a generally perfect decision. When they arrived, Ahamefula being the group leader stood and started the narration of their seek to Ohafia.



'Allies of God's own people', he began, my own flesh and blood in oat and the promises of our both ancestors, I greet you all and begin my request for Ohafia's intervention on the repeated incidences that I will be outlasting in the moment.

While Ahamefula spoke, all the Chief's listened still, analytically very quiet, silently and carefully without uttering any objections to his requests and after he had finished, they waited a while and afterwards asked that they get excused for a while, that they may between themselves, consider a recommendable decision.

In no time, one of the Chief's, the youngest among them, came back calling Ahamefula and his colleagues back into the obu where they were, as so favoured a relazing discussion as the people will do amongst themselves.

That day, the meeting had ended with the Chief's firstly appreciating them for having first honoured Ama-Ekpu with this call, and made offerings to them and tents that they may stay for the night, until their next day walk. However, it was unfortunate Ama-Ekpu stood in an unknown fear, but instead of an ultra or quickly disapproving this ones that had besort them this honour, in opened opinion, they asked that they should for some considering concerns, go check on the other clans response on this and return with reports from them, and that from with, their decisions may be decided in regards.

In this order, the emissaries set for another old Ohafia clan and another, in heir accordance, with the powers and influences they portrayed in all of Ohafia, beginning from Ndi-Uduma-Ukwu, Ebem, Nkwo-Ebi, Nde-a-Nku, Okagwe and Oboro. All these long walk through, they came back round once more to Ama-Ekpu, rejected and badly disappointed.

It was in Ama-Ekpu in the Head-Chief's place that they later got the revelation of existing resentments of the warring peoples over Aro, since the fall of its grace and glory, and for Ohafia in paticular, since that time of Eze-Chima whom they had rolled into battle with, side by side, regardless the grace's existing odds.

However, the head Chief out of sympathy to Ahamefula's unrelent, adviced that they go far into the wards, till they reached the last end, where a man of very powerful valour and the leader of a cult group which owned membership to almost all important and seasoned men of both historically exceptional and influential war commanders of old, that in

his good heart if God wills, he may find favour.

The man was Udumoke, a very old man who still reared lions; a living ancestor, holding existing accounts of new Ohafia's entire life span, since their last days roaming, east crossed Orimiri Ogbaru where he was born, in their past abode.

Now, in quest of Udumoke, entering Ama-Ekpu's last ward hugely bordered beyond its huts and fences by largely thick and very tall mangrove trees of the forest around them, where actually was as well more rural compared to the other wards, Ahamefula and his group had begun this time like no other, a worst sense to this feelings of excessive shadowing from within this jammed huts, more closely jammed side by side than the others further up. However, being actually shadowed, the air of the environment was now so stiff for them, that if they were kids, they would have had shit on their pants and turned running in fear

Nonetheless, in no time, two little leopard camo dressed boys had come out from an open area where these men could see clearly their own shadowing, though they hid besides passer by's. And like one's sent by a superior, immediately got back running, into the road corner from where they emerged from.

The Aro's regalia must have caused a panic, and with Udumoke being the only man of very great importance in the entire ward, therefore, this highly classed people automatically had come this far, to meet no other but the lion-rearer. They followed the kids direction and got to Udumoke, already sitting and waiting. He welcomed them in and in very short time of their conversation, after Ahamefula started his appeal, stating the Ama-Ekpu Chief's advice in the appeal, that Udumoke may take them in, and into his headed cult party, that's to hold in the coming week, that on this Ama-Ekpu's helped wisdom, that they the Aro may at least be gifted a platform that God's will, they may regain the people's faith in an Aro call.

For Ahamefula, he was ready to stay even for another week and more, so long as he will in the end, lead this army home, right into Arochukwu, and taking in one, all the long revolt, to the ill of his name that for many years now, he had so sort.

'When the cult gathered and on Udumoke's loud bell ring, great silence befell the large room and whineing, dancing and all things pertained with the clubbing, all stopped in the same. Then on their looking to the

hightable emerged a young man, Ahamefula, standing from his sit, and Udumoke, laying a well beautiful introduction of this fine young Aro-regal dressed man. Afterwards, the stage was all left to this headman, being Ahamefula and from this start, he started his entire throw of lucks, which now depends on how much his words can influence this heart strong men before him.

I am Ahamefula, son of Agwu, of the clan and lineage of the priestlies, of them who walk in and out, -into the depts of the Temple, right into it's court-rooms, unhurt and unstruck, going in and out, in our hands held carrying offerings of peace and sins for all, -Ahamefula briefly introduced himself, carefully exempting the mention of Agwu alongside Okoroafor his own father but Agwu from whose seed their particular descendant began.

My own blood and one people under the oat of our both ancestors; he continued, I have come to see you over again in this court gathering that though some of you in here, I recall that I had formally seen, and I know that for the rest, surely our visit had been overspread since the day's, telling of some Aro's, who had come for Ohafia. However, in anyways, I plead one thing at least -that in respect of God and his own, that you let this interest you and give some listings to this sovereign request.

Thereafter, Ahamefula started a bay lay of the entire offences and responsive repay of no harm but equal raid as happened in the front gates of Aro-Ngwa, undermining it's sovereignty, the law and dignity.

When Ahamefula was done, the hall got fell into a grave divided-silence. Everyone already seemed tempted to the glaring image of a raided Aba city-close, as suggested by Ahamefula whom had disbanded all claims of war but way simple, an infliction of equal punishment by raiding the involved villages to-loot down in repayment to their rioting in Aro-Ngwa and the aquiring of spoils, left to each, to how much he can take.

It was glaring and tempting that even a youth will enthusiastically join the march as so to acquire so much sellables for his later pleasure, once the Aro job was done. However, in no time a man of about eighty five years of age is heard shouting repeatedly, trying to clear everybody's delusion in return to their clear minds as he taught, and observing this doubts yet unsolved, quickly now, before people start giving words that for him, they should not keep.

At Ebem, -the man walked up and continued louder; we had met this men, and this one in particular, he said pointing at Ahamefula. I have seen them before, this particular man, I have heard him speak, don't fall to his sweet tongue, he highlighted and paused again, walking up further in powerful charisma and as well authoritatively looking up at his fellows, right in their faces, like say he was looking into their souls.

Udumoke, he called directly at Udumoke, up on the high table. Remember he said. Remember our sufferings many years past and now weigh, and look again for yourself, if ever we become a product of such calamity only to abandon that weighty tragedy to this young softened generation, what is it, you think will become their fate in the coming future. So much, we died then that to our self preservation we became and we're made beasts, how much more beastly will this one's become, if ever things fall the sloop ever again, and then, this one standing just before us will be told in stories as a new Chima, and our ill learnt lessons of grace departure, from within the temples of Arochukwu itself.

God have left Aro -he shouted more aloud, and that's the only reason to our shame, that we became of that part of Idu-the only seceded territory to invaders, ever. That was our march with Chima -he ended.

Now, Ahamefula and his three emissary colleagues came to the full understanding of the loss of confidence and enthusiasm in an Aro cause as their fathers told in several events of witness and all this for the Ohafia's is but only considerate to their sufferings passed through, in their years of sack and hardship, to find and sustain a yet inhabited inhabitable landscape for a new beginning, in that time of the century, which was basically difficult, as the people's population was extensively grown, and in man's already existing complicity, lands, were claimed ownership of, by people just by it, right into the dept of it's forests, that they would without restrain inflict even pain on whosoever taught a trespasser.

Then, other people amongst the Ohafia's like those upwards who crossed orimiri to the east, subjoined with other already existing inhabitants as they too did at Ibeku. However, these influx on the other people's side, beside that large river-side Onicha market, the growing and this differing mixture evolved on that northern country part, a much greater mega-city, more growing than a bush's wild-fire, than Aba ever has -a larger mega boom city emerged, and in this like, a generally communal Igbo country started to have in its existence, continual

evolution of cities in places of this mix.

Afterwards, following a long silence in the room and then murmurs of splinter discussing voices from several corners since the old man's address, a man sitted in the front on an outer corner, a young and very wealthy man of about Ahamefula's age, rose and started a preamble to his opinion and position on the discussed issue, -this man, was Ifeajuna.

An ujo to the core as many will mock, but luckily gathered in the midst of Ufies.

Risen to air his opinion, he had received so much out roar and insults from his counterparts before this visitor's, that so many among them already starting to throw their wine horns on him to sit down in shame, shouting that 'a woman shouldn't be speaking when men discussed men's thing'.

Nonetheless, this for the worst, had become Ifeajuna's greatest embarrassment ever since he had joined several social and cult groups since his Ufie attainment and being so because he had been embarrassed before honoured visitors.

Several decades ago, in the late old and present century, in those days of great warlords such as Kamalu; son of Ngwo, Ajadu; son of Adukuru Mmanwu and some others like Ogaebi, west-march, during the commencement of the little kingdom -Benin, upon its expansion to becoming an empire state, and in unforeseen reality, marching eastwards, to villages taught minor-distinct secluded countries, only to meet a later absolute end in this march, including further northwards and north-eastern Igbo boaders of the village, that even the Igala in-total, did not think of such unsurviving system against and amongst its own when power fell to their freedom, that on the Ogosie's own existing rule, side by side with their uplifted in-laws, a great disappointment had fallen to separate the many peoples of this later not militarily conquered but inter-corporation fall of the defunct Idu, 'of old rule by Ogosie's', that the people's, among whom a later to become Ohafia's, are inclusive, took to a total departure out of retained pride, from the compromised territory.

Nevertheless, after their first accommodation in Ibeku -'the only people who in this honour they came to call brothers', this people under a defunct name unfortunately roamed further more but to no avail, cause there rearly was an unoccupied and unfarmed inhabitable landmass, just about the side of another -'as man was one, living by the survival of the

other', in the growing century, and even much now with people or their offshoots, further redressing to a more southwards face, occupying even creeks, islands and wastelands, all which were centuries back unoccupied, unimportant and useless, now in result of the booming oversea economy.

However, in the final acknowledgement of this reality and their end-migration to now settle inside a thickly isolated and unfarmed mangrove forest, begot them their name – Ohafia of which they answer till this very day, meaning 'the community of the forest', that they identified with and in turn got identified by others.

'It was for them, a new beginning and historically, a difficult one indeed'. Nearest communities to this territorial piece had started making crush claims, that will soon begin inevitable conflicts after conflicts.

In no less time, to the side of the Ekoi's and the Ibibio's bordering further east to this forest they had called home, came attacks and repeated attacks against them new people, that so they may exit the forest that they had dwelled. This began the origin of the turning into beast and beasting of these Ohafia's of the day, and the making of them, dreaded monsters, -that on this following, the military and garrison live style came to birth, in the organic-necessity, into the dreaded spartied culture and the becoming of an endless warring people.

Houses – built against the other in adjoining sequence, to be, in-watching for the other, and lock in the closet-by of the next, automatically making rounded unbroken chained fences to provide but just one entrance and retreat position into each ward in every clans area and village in a wider and larger somewhat connected joint. Moreover, in the larger interconnected ways, the different wards became in such chain ways that assemblies for defences were easy and a ward assembly of brigade's were also easy as well as that of the batallions, that if invaded, a ward comes into its own defence, but if invaded in large numbers or when a ward cannot sustain it's defence, the next ward, and greatly, the entire people rise to the defence call.

In the old, it happened that -severally in the invading attacks of these survival bent villages, when the garrisons were still young, weak and illy connected, that the popular tactics that had never left the lips of their war songs became –the letting in of the enemy into a number of units or ward depending on their size, and later on, in this fight, either close the



log-gate behind them and surrounding them for their total annihilation if powerful enough to stand the invaders strength or instead charging into their fears of their already scared self's in their shadowing nature wards, in that moment when their only option remain a retreat or a fight to the finish, or forced into surrender when the gates get closed, seperating between wards, the invaders large numbers, -over one gate, separating the people from their advancing fellows, if at all they had come with greater fortifications in the challenge of yet handicapped Ohafia that to this term, more surrenders came forth-with, than a fight to the finish.

Nevertheless, this attacks took a natural death after Ohafia attained a great level of defence, and so the angry invaders relented to picking them up outside of these fortified garrisons, when separated from it, either in group or single individuals.

Again, this saw to the routine, ritual and traditional becoming of 'head hunting' slay, off the already Igbo character in war vexation and victory over-prove and excitement, -that came on, after many years of restrain of the enemy on their taking in equal, this man-hunting kind of fight out-off in this very gruesome becoming, later evolved into the character amongst what their culture became, beginning from their prior prey state of people's of this groups that gets endlessly attacked, to now unending attackers, -that the days washed-culture on the brave act's of marching into the wild to single-handedly man over a wild beast, returning with its head as prove of the defeat, a group of young men joining any warring parties where they find battles to return with heads of men they had killed and their spoils most particularly, that started in the original state of -one man, out in the wild mangrove, single-handedly overpowering an enemy or two, and returning with their heads for prove of his defeat', began out in manner of their later enjoiment in this endless revenge culture on their long tormented isolation and murder.

Soonest, the head-hunting finally became tradition and so, stated – 'the attainment of manhood' required every man to risk death and prove his valour before being considered fully -a man.

For Ifeajuna, being a wealthy and very known man, he had been an ujo for very many years and in his fame, had been widely known as such, until one time when news broke that he had attained manhood with the killing of a bush-hog.

It is one thing of common, that time after time, the Ufie's of ones

age-grade who was still an ujo, come around raiding his home to leverage, to make spoils of its properties and at times, lay siege in his house, keeping him away for a long time until his last break point when he summons courage to attain his own dignity.

Ujo's were a very unprivileged small group of cowards that even the little freedom of allowing them the freedom to marry as many wives as they pleased was restricted from-with, and in the even reality, only few privileged among them like Ifeajuna, could pass the difficult time of getting himself a woman who would risk the reproduction of his gene of fear-fulls. However still, many of this groups only wake up to find out their wives had run into the next man's house in divorce of this privileged ujo, as was soon the position of Ifeajuna and his wife Amaka.

'This women were looked down upon by their fellows, even in the general market places and when in social gatherings, their opinions doesn't hold water'.

In Ifeajuna's own story, many weeks after his attainment of manhood and rumours that had spread of his ill attainment of that bush-hog, came stories of his endless quarrels with Amaka his wife that one night at the heat of their verbal misunderstandings, as spread by surrounding neighbours, that his wife was being heard mocking Ifeajuna to his silence when she started boasting about how she had gone into the wild mangroves and had returned with that bush-hog which she handed over to Ifeajuna to end their shame.

This story however, became more popular and widely believed, days later when Amaka ran into Ejike's house in-divorce of Ifeajuna.

At the end of that meeting, it had become obvious the unwillingness and untrust of the people to engage in an Aro-war cry. On leaving the clans territory the next day, walking past the side training fields where they trained young boys from age seven other than the general militia age-eight training period, general to the entire Igbo state, the ears of the emissaries be-heard their greatest confrontation as the boys changed their battle training song from; 'the leopard has been trapped, forward lets go', to another full of praises and mockery.

"...they went Mgbede Mgbede, came and reached Ama-Ekpu.

They entered the house of Nkuma Obiri-agu son of Ola,  
wizard of guns for whom the gun is a playing thing,

son of great mother Agbooke Eze-ji, offspring of them  
that rear lizards like goat.

If you kill their men they will not avenge,

but if you kill their lizard they will rise up

in vengeance; that is the home of Olugu Ebiri.

The Aro's came and again like it was in Ama-Oboro,

were rejected".

## CHAPTER SIX

Back home in Arochukwu, since the departure of the three grouped emissaries sent to Edah, Abam and Ohafia respectively, for this beckons of war-cries, the entire village had turned to become an unresting-anxiously expecting people', with uncountable accounts of stories related to times like this circulating all around the village, in places of market, worships, the village squares, bars, including farm yards.

Amongst the old even, who obviously have nothing much to be disturbed off this life anymore, but to sit and talk as much as they pleased, had now become the most pleased among the entire people of the communities, that they had now found for themselves something doing, in that every evening, it had become events -they come gathering in the square where little children, including teenagers and some older people gathered to share and the others, listen to these personal tales they told about expectations on days like this, while some others among these old class, who enjoyed the bar instead, gathered therein, where in the midst of other men in these bars, they tell and share in this stories, while they shared alongside the wine and gin's pleasure.

This time, also experienced the greatest periods of children's late returns, 'unlike a regular visit on a full moon night to an aged man or woman's house to hear tales of the moonlight afterwhich they may had helped the woman to finish up her meal and clean the house that she would dish some of it to them, mostly, if in their joined preparation. This times, they came way ward later and even their parents understood what the times procured.

In Ahamefula's own household, his wife Oluoma since three days now had since being finishing her evening chors so early, as so to join 'carefree' Agbara to the square after his endless home bringing stories of the 'same-time' 'march-in-storm' of Aro by a combined crowd of Abiriba big-iron sword smith warriors, sequentially followed by the noisy down march of the Edah's -'people of the valley lands', then Abam and the Ohafia's who were said to had matched in particular sequence, where each clans battalion amongst them all, much worst than the Abiriba's, -'being their own half or even the Opobo's of both inland and the coastlands \_who on theirs place but one blindfolded skull or head of either a defeated general', the Ohafia's had men among their leads, carrying on their heads, a plan-flat plank of special designs each, handlessly carried, without holding this planks from falling and on this

planks, each had either three human heads or skulls placed respectively, with the one at the middle most times mocked with dignifying caps of very respected ranks worn upon them -who probably were slain war captains, commanders or chiefs, all occupying high positions.

These men, the old people said were told to be men they either had defeated in battle or had overpowered in individual combat.

In all of this however, since the week, a sudden heartbreak had overtaken Aro and a sudden quietness above the entire village and it's communities.

No one ever saw the old men again, nor heard their tales following the individual return of Elechi, 'the group leader of those sent to Abam and later Okoro, 'the leader of those specially sent to Edah, considering Okoro's personal relationship with it's people, from where his first in-laws hails from.

Now, all that the people coldly awaited, was Ahamefula's turn up, his disappointment and how tragic he will make his own displays, as the ones before him, done earlier in their discreet modes of dodging being perceived failures.

Since two weeks now, having stayed very much longer than the other two, which effect sometimes placed some level of lingering hope that his delay may probably, or must be due to effects of the large-mutitude of the very un-disappointing people's of Ohafia, as told in the old men's tales; -'and only if Ahamefula may succeed in achieving any half of a kind, then all his life time pursuit in this generally emotive time, would had 'become', in a single big-blow, with all the decapitated hearts and mouths, singing his praise and his name on their lips day and night.

Finally, the young man returned, like those before him, just as they left. And the long awaited come-to-reality, of all the times historic-tales all shattered in ultimate heart-crush in this final heartbreak.

The pilgrim was close and Arochukwu in particular, needs either peace or enforcement of their desired respect before that holy period and so were desperate over this, and in concernment with the space and time available in this run. Nonetheless, four days later in a small meeting held in the temple with gathering of some young and old representatives, it was declared holy the establishment of 'Aro-Aha', '-a warring Aro'.

Joy had filled in the shattered hearts of many once again and

expectations and words in the mouth of others, including the old, who started spare-heading bit by bits -out again, licking their bruises with wise sayings, justifying why it was not unholy and a wise move, the officiating of warring Aro-sects.

However, this was for the women's greater majority, a great turmoil, as schedules after schedules of unusual meetings, came to be noticed of them.

However, it isn't a man's thing when women did their things and as such, -the men try as much to look-away.

In the fields, many young people, boys and girls were beginning to get recruited in warfare training and amongst these young people, it was a thing of excitement as adventure was all that their minds is amused upon, and in the case, followed by the tales of war, 'being a natural part of this adventures', that in man's general ways, always told sweet and pleasing to the ears in it's greatest highlight of heroism, bravery and legendary, without emphasis of equal pains, sacrifices and bloodshed that follows-with.

Nevertheless, on an Nkwo market day, which is the last day of market of which the women contained the majority of it's operational workforce, as the men were more interested in the more strenuous adventures like merchantry, far away from the village markets, -the women had shut down the days market to a total lockdown, commencing an unannounced protest. And on the other day, when an important meeting was scheduled in the village square, over-rode the entire place with a suprise of a special kind of protest, never expected by any, led by Ogbokiri, -the women leader, early that day, prompt at sunrise.

Firstly, they had come into the square in excessive counts, very early, way before every other person started arriving, that on arrival of the men in particular, they found the entire auditorium already occupied, and filled to it's peak, by protesting women all holding small fresh leave branches 'in-placard'.

'This was unusual of women in that large number, who are known to be less likely interested in political issues, and only seen in such great magnitude on occasions of dances, wrestling and similar entertainments'.

Nevertheless, everyone waited for the others and finally the chiefs to



arrive and see for themselves, in this matter of women's protest, which is always so strenuous and so very disturbing to the men, so much that it keeps them on their toes and even off their own houses, that so much that in most end, the women either ends getting what they wanted or gets smartly manoeuvred with something surely, of the kind for which they had issued, when presented issues are things surely -impossible.

Now, with the men standing and the women sitted, excluding those who already had come with their own stoles and on arrival got sitted'; awaiting the chiefs and other highly-classed reps -in less than an hour, all the chiefs had come by as well, and now, Eziokwu, 'the proud', who in a sense, every other chief indirectly seemed to be waiting for.

It was this time that Ogbokiri and some group of four women now stepped down from the auditorium to lead and speak the entire women's mind.

"Women should I begin, she asked loudly speaking to all the other women and in respond, they all replied aloud, '-yes' in affirmation.

Women should I pour out all of your venoms, she asked again, this time raising her hands and waving round directionlessly the leave branch she held and they all replied once more in affirmation, doing the same in excitement, then she started.

'We the women of this gracious village, have come this day to first of all, suspend this unholy gathering and any other like it, and all of its unhealthy developments and also to bring to end, this plans of death you have set for our young, boys and girls altogether, -she emphasized and paused for a while, only to be embacked by the other women who couldn't wait but came hailing '\_tell them', to Ogbokiri, 'tell them that they hear', -the others joined as they emphasized.

This children of ours, she continued, sons and daughters, who we beared in our own wombs for straight nine months without exceptions, she said while at once, the woman behind her, among the two she had lead down with, subtly added -"nwoke ogaemeli ya'\_can a man do it", - and brought into this complicity of a world, Ogbokiri stated, and had to pause at this moment that already, other women, joyously came hailing the 'nwoke-ogaemeli ya' subtle rhetoric, and those sitted by and very close by the standing men, already started to engage them in out-bursting arguments, arousing in all areas, on the woman versus man's child-stress topic.

However, as the noise went down after the short interruption, Ogbokiri continued just at once.

Now tell us, she continued, -on what bases should we be confident and allow our children go into battle with you. Tell us, tell us now that we witness, on what grounds exactly, she emphasized. While you train this ones in inexperienced warfare, that we all know and can largely testify non amongst you have had what a battle is like, nor seen what it is like or feels like, to be lost in the midst of numerous bloodbaths, -tell us now, she spoke in great spirit; cause we want to know, what is it, that you will justify this day, a solid reason why we should allow you this young ones - she said pointing at the young and teenagers, where they stood among the men.

On this established state, the men got vexed and started leaving in their numbers, beginning from Eziokwu who shouted 'rubbish' and immediately turned his back out, for his ego couldn't stand anymore Ogbokiri's laments, nor the slightest patience to push even an antagonizing reply to her and her women legion, as he calls them.

Nonetheless, and unfortunately, it was a women's protest, thus an already open knowledge, that what had occurred, even of their bad mouthedness, is but a preamble, and soonest, it would be knocking on every man's door, room and dinner and the men will find no peace from all corners of look at every site of their wife and wives 'at worst', -respectively.

In Ahamefula's own house, on the day of its first knock, Oluoma had served his best meal for dinner, and while he washed his hands to begin a focused dissemination of the fish-filled vegetable soup, Oluoma had begun along a narration of the women's last held meeting on the trending issue and their weeks stretched plan for an earth shacking march, the things they approved and those they discarded. -How funny that it was, always an open secret.

Ahamefula finally managed to get rid of the meals tasty fishes, -that is of most importance to him when it comes to vegetables. Afterwards, he hurriedly washed clean his hands and like one hurrying for an almost forgotten appointment, \_cutting short his dinner, with an excuse of necessity, to go see Nwachukwu his friend, Ahamefula successfully escaped Oluoma's ear itching protest open-secret tales.

Shortly on his entry into Nwachukwu's bar, Ahamefula was surprised on seeing his clans-man, Lekota, heavily sweating and just ending his long started wailing in faint tone, saying, 'since I have escaped this one, there is no other that I possibly will not, not even from Orie', the youngest of his wives, -the one that drives his craze'.

A week later, when the protest metamorphosed, into a house to house march, the circulating story of the un-flinching Eziokwu, erupted of his sudden disappearance into thin air the moment Ogbokiri stormed his compound with three hundred of her women legion.

It was said that one of his wives had personally led the protesters into the compound when the other wives who hadn't gone for that days march on seeing them quickly and gladly joined along \*-and considering if his office was like of farther countries, like say the presidents or reps wives, joining in protest against their policies",\* into the immediate and sure lead to the obu, where Eziokwu was sitted, just a minute ago when the women trooped in, as testified by one of his wives. But on arriving the obu, their search for Eziokwu came to no avail, even in their thorough search of his room in particular, and the walls round it but never had any sight of Eziokwu ever again.

The evening later, his servants told of stories, when he was caught sneaking off a small thatch hurt, deeply made in the barns corner, that on his notice of his being watched, he immediately turned the entire house with commanding noise of rumours he said to had been spreading of him on this same day that he never stepped outside, that he had sneaked off on sighting Ogbokiri's legion's storm of his compound, claiming that if truly Ogbokiri had come after me, that she should have waited', that is, if actually they could stand his sight.

In the end; -of this happy and as well distorting times, Abaka -the judge, later addressed the women's protest and promised to take it upon himself for redress.

In the week, he had invited Ahamefula to come join him to Aro-Ngwa, from where they plan to join its chiefs in-company, to go meet and address the chiefs and people of the problem, starting from the Abiriba traders there, which is one of their sworn allies, followed by Opobo, then Etche, enroute Ngwa road into the hearts of Ngwa itself, situated just by the side of another offshot of Aro-Ngwa's, the Umu-Aro, meaning children of Aro.

Now in Ngwa, one of Igbos largest and oldest people. Having addressed chiefs of Isi-ala-Ngwa, 'head and genesis Ngwa land', and now in Obi-Ngwa, where a greater practice of it's societal pattern displayed, Abaka begins on Ahamefula's open curiosity, a detailed reason behind the scanty nature of a supposed large clan, which in effect of this consequence, in a many years development, resulted to its face-surface isolated nature.

Using a parable, Abaka explained; -one man has four sons and on the day of his death, he shares his land inheritances to his most senior son, distancing him from the others in this endless markless landmass, and in same manner, allocate to the second , the third and the southern lands to the last son.

Following his culture, his children repeats its method, and also his grandchildren after them, and it becomes culture decades after another, and in this following, one has to make his house in the midst of his limitless land mass to ensure its perfect reach and cultivation, and this is today, the root-reason why the stone-walk through, after another, before one gets to see a road path leading into another compound that he can in the end, but only see its thatchs, if it's not already blocked in-view by very tall palm trees.

In Isi-Ala-Ngwa, the people had come to make agreements of peace and sanity, though their youths never stopped complaining and asking that their elders first state clear their own problems on Aba's encroachment, which they hesitated outlaying, that at once, the youths started in the natural Igbo character, -accusing them of being unrepresenting and thus sell outs in this consequence.

While in Obi-Ngwa, the entire chiefs had agreed along, except that their youths who weren't available at the time of their visit were said to had travelled, to their next relative neighbour village, for a wrestling competition that will be ending in the next coming week.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

Two weeks after Ahamefula's return from their mediating mission with Abaka, the week after happened to be the last of the month's week, followed by the next, which holds a session of the long awaited pilgrim the entire people had been timing along with, as so to inflict equal insanity of sovereign breach against Aro, to all the other villages that had a hand in that breach of Aro-Ngwa, before the holy period comes by, which surely will automatically get them handicapped on ensuring it's execution.

However, for Ahamefula, the entirety of both his general and personal interest on state matters in this time being, only mattered on his concerns of self pleasure and utmost satisfactory feast, coming with this pilgrim season.

In his plan, he set's to cruise at least now, being slightly, a kind of large feast period, until his very last stay in Aro that was way much close coming, afterwhich he would be returning to Aba, and to accomplish it all, without any interference by any calls of state appointment, even if it is Abaka that calls him.

Almost, his leave was on the expiry, and he is yet to ask of his wife's opinion on his return with Stewart -now Nwaubani.

Nevertheless, on this faithful day, on his way returning from Nwachukwu's bar, he encounters past the village square, a man and his stranded family who had travelled from very far, as so to participate in the coming pilgrimage, only to arrive late due to his wife's pregnant condition.

Firstly, he didn't notice the stranded man but just at the mans calling, a trinkling cold-chill ran through his spine; afterwards, he came walking towards the man who had called in an old and soly-absolved mix of filtered Arochukwu in mix with old-Efik pronouncements, that his memory in the grasp got triggered in a quick 'recollect' of the last-time he heard such wordings, and at once, -recollected it was during his childhood, until that month he turned ten, when after which all things fell apart.

Nevertheless, he still walked close to this man as so to confirm for himself, regardless having heard him in the first already.

Greetings brother, the man greeted Ahamefula after which they

exchanged hand shakes.

My name is Abasi, he continued by first introducing himself.

Abasi son of Udo, Udo from 'Atakpa'; he said, describing Kalabar in indigenous Efik's name for Kalabar -thus, he hailed either from the Efiks in particular or that provincial part.

On knowing this, a soft tone of relief fell upon Ahamefula's face and his earlier anxiety filled face. And with his usual wide smirk, a feeling of familiarity and relief overtook the discussion space.

On the Efik man's wife's side, she came wondering what it was exactly, that must have suddenly amused Ahamefula.

I am Ahamefula, living heir of the first son's of Agwu, great-ancestor of Obasi son of Okwu, Okwu -great son of Agwu, of the son's of living son's of the lineage of Agwu, son of Abasi, Abasi son of old father Okwu.

Ahamefula in his usual manner identified his own self, carefully exempting the made-bad name -Okoroafor, which during his early periods of his reintegration, only got him bad reputations, disdain, rejections and bad lucks, that with little question by the other, and little sum-up's if existing traces, from people that he dealt with, either for favour, marriage or business, on adding his own Okoroafor to their ancestry name -Agwu, brought all long built successes towards collapse.

'Ugo, family of his first girl of thought, much more being the one that he was betrothed to, being a similar wealthy family, and even favoured outside many who would go any length in friendship to attract their daughter's be betrothed to Okoroafor's son's, -almost abandoned him without a rethink like say his off a theftry lineage which of marriage is considered worst and in this unmarrying or reproducing rejection, a special saying grew of it's existence, 'that theftry closes a lineage'. Nonetheless, her wedding with Ahamefula proved Oluoma, a most lover and most loyal that he never would allow rubbish chances come against her, and still why he hadn't taken a second wife, even as his lineages first heir.

We have come for the holy pilgrim, 'Abasi son of Udo continues'. We have been on this journey, on canoes and main roads since four days now, but so stressful, making tents after tents as a result



of my wife's condition, he said, pointing at his pregnant wife just sitted with his daughter few steps back.

Please, we seek for a place to lay our heads and luggages, even if we make our own food.

Now, on that phase of holy pilgrim, Abasi had made a quest which was holy and to whom which he had made, must either honour it's quest, or take this one to either a public or private place, like in the place of people like Eziokwu whose compound possesses lots of space and hurts, where his hospitality must be honored, if one isn't capable of appreciating that honour.

However, for Ahamefula who in the time already had a friend and his family of four who he hosts from Aro-Ndizogu, he had for a course of surprise and this excitement, personally found reason to as well, to host Abasi, even as a young family with small compound and no excess number of hurts, in the case that at least, that if for nothing, to at least present before Azuka and as well Abaka -'his guidian' this surprise, surely to their excitement when he invites them over, to see for themselves that surely, everything is becoming very fine, and gradually revolving that not one just from Ekpemiong, but totally a non Aro of that world part, from far away Atapka, -that people still visit for the pilgrim, even in Aro's existing stumble.

Nonetheless, his being this man's host may as well, add to his good name that his long aspired.

In the days of the fathers, when the land was greatly holy and honoured in it's full wordings – Aro'chukwu-Okike Abiama, being; the holy and sacred place of 'the supreme-God the creator, where his come to be seeked', and in the earliest times of the ancient marriage after 'sambartyon', the marrying group before that marriage, only existed as kiths and clans from one father and tribe at large, off the many other descendants and tribes, scattered in so many countries and kingdoms just like themselves, before this of theirs,' -a kingdom without Kings, where they found refuge, that they too having suffered until this 'last', to now become in one-mix of gene, of them and the ancients, here at the

earth's equatorial territories. The newly people amongst in this gene, before their marriage, existed as clans of tribes of same and one promised father from whom all descended from, further where they came with scrolls and seals of wisdom, and later on, after this marriage with this ancients, they all began to live among and settle further inwards in-the-mix that the whole people in time to come became a spectacular breed of gene, of the sacred and the ancient, -to become one unique and spectacular people's breed. However, before time, the children of the ancestors of the new, was the Areli's, who moved into the country, from farther north-western boarder lines, across Orimiri and settled wide and through, spreading through and wide and even in the smallest of Igbo villages, 'deep into the western lands of many distinct people's, where with their presence, still reigns existence of their name - 'Igbo', and Aro in appendix of someother names', with the coming of the later from the Igala-kingdoms territorial area, from where they first submerged, then the Arod's, being the Aro's, and amongst them, spread the lineage of the un-inheriters to now put Aro in it's position. They spread it's sprinkles, with a major move in, from the north-east, down further southwards and southeast wards.

Nevertheless, the Efiks, being an Aro-part; either as indigenous or one they had migrated along in this very old reference, departed the other, leaving Ibom -their Arochukwu's community, and pushed further southwards to the present day Atakpa.

However, one may not point accurately the cause to this exist in this incident of very many centurie's occurance, but for Ahamefula, what he never forgets remains the cause of their last self-exist of their remaining selves, caused in consequence of his own father's act -Okoroafor.

Now in Ahamefula's house; were Chika his old and childhood friend and his fat wife, Sopuruchi and two daughters. Now inclusive in this number became Abasi, with his pregnant wife and child.

It was already getting late and whilst the women joined hands with Oluoma in preparation of the dinner, the children on their own side, played in hide and seek, whilst the men sat in Ahamefula's orchard, enjoying the fresh nights breeze coming in the direction, while they discussed on their wishes for the pilgrim; discussing with the relaxing taste of the red-apples that they ate along.

Soonest, Abasi started to emphasis on the trust campaign that had

compelled him and so many others who he is sure must have been there already in Arochukwu, and to this men who brought this surety of a campaign that he talked about, he addressed as priestlies, on preaching-crusade canoes in all of their market places, over and over, preaching in campaign of one they acclaimed old priests true son and heir, 'not minding conspired tussle by his uncle', who remains true blood and one blessed with the true priests gift, heard in stories of the priests, -son of the just departed true priest before the shame, -of ancient commands, spiritually and miracles, that one who seeks, should seek Aro-Abiama.

They said he speaks and heaven listened. However, resides in Ibini-Ukpabi of Old-Efik, where the years holy pilgrim will now hold, boycotting his uncle who has no business whatsoever with God's service. God will hear us even there -the men claimed.

Whilst they discussed, the women came along, with a fine aroma water-yam porridge, served on tray that they may eat in one plate just as it is said, 'a family that eats in one plate, grows to become more united than one who eats in separated plates'.

Oluoma had taken the first bit as the main preparer of the food, after which others joined-with, except Chika who burst into laughter, merely looking at the face of the meal that he started the question of the authenticity of its delicacy.

The meal, made with water-yam and so many other ingredients, including meats and fishes at most, and numerous unshelled periwinkles, scattered in every direction there in, ment to be sucked like a straw as so to extract the snails-meat from within this shells. This food is called -Ekpang.

It happened that in Izuogu and farther northwards from where Chika hails, he had never seen a meal as such, which on the other hand is widely eaten all around Arochukwu itself, and the Eastern neighbouring villages.

Nonetheless, after their persistent assurance to Chika, on how fantastic the meal was, on Chika's first taste and in his sudden un-believe, he came on again, bursting into another gear change of laughter, laughing this time at his own first restrain and in same time, the amusement of this meal with the extremely marvelous taste it embedded, -covered within. There and then, Chika began a story of the moonlight told to him and many other kids very many years ago, on a night that he would never

forget, on matters concerning foreign foods and being quick into eating anything on mere sight.

That funny and unfortunate evening they had gone squirrel hunting, after they helped an old woman carry her luggages all the way from where Obasi told them of Ahamefula's ill state, and unfit to go playing with them, that when they got to the woman's place, where she claimed lived so very many squirrels just by her backyard, the kids had quickly set their catapults and had in sequence separated for the hunt, only for the others to return with at least a hunt, except himself, that while they roasted theirs and he felt jealous, he silently went back into the bush. And since his catapults inability to hit his squirrel shots, he angrily by the wall side's, angrily got down two lizards, quickly emerged and out, he set for the foul cook, following his subtle claim that his got tired of the roasting thing, and chose to cook his. With the pot closed, however, he wouldn't allow anyone see through -that they would not laugh to his face. But on the old woman's super-insist, after her query on his taking her cooking pot, Chika finally let his hunt pot opened, -to the mockery that didn't end, until it spread to the entire neighborhood.

This many tales in the Igbo society, becomes the very foundation at which the coming generations reflect upon, to become wiser than their peers when they encounter the wider society and reality.

His story was that of a man and his accommodated guest in Isu-Njaba, and it goes this way; "a man was returning home from work where he met another, a traveller who had been caught up by the days rain that fell so heavily that the road got so bad that he couldn't continue afterward.

In his quest for hospitality and in the young bachelor's good heart, he took him in, into his one housed compound, where one hut gets divided in its multipurpose provision of both his room, obi and obu, then to it's side or behind, a small and simple erected kitchen, that he may stay for, till the day later to which he would continue in his journey. But coming to the next day, an equal of the days before heavy rain started by dawn and through the other hours of the day until evening, that it held everywhere hostage with endless sprinkles after its heavy fall, which again affected the foreigner who now would be waiting once more, on the good will of his host, who asked that he should, than suffer in the rain, getting both himself, his cart and his goods wet.

Nevertheless, the bachelor with combination of what his guest had, had managed the hours with this little food that was at the time, until the third day, when in the morning on the Njaba man's good gestures, he had asked the foreigner who now had nothing, to wait that he go to his farm, and then the market, to purchase spices for what he is to get from the farm, and in the market, already prepared pepper cakes, on which the first they would eat and some others, particularly the cakes, he would be giving to the foreigner in the sustenance of his remaning journey.

In this notwithstanding, there was hunger already existing between the two men, and for the traveller who had no options, and at still, pleased with both his host's good heart, sat patiently in the front yard, patiently waiting for his return.

It was at this time that he saw a very large python, crossing by the compound, through the corner of the house majestically, moving without fear, even on the obvious acknowledgement that it's been sited by a person.

On seeing this, the foreigner quickly went for the Njaba man's machete, carefully placed -resting on his kitchen wall side and immediately, struck and cut the python into bits.

'He had got a big hunt!. At least, he will entertain his good host whose food and hospitlity he had long dwelled upon. So he hurriedly went into the kitchen and started it's preparation, into an ultra delicious pepper-soup meat, as perfectly prepared in his own village.

In no time the bachelor had returned only to see his guest, bringing down a fine aroma-pleasing pot from the fire.

'I just got a heavy weight hunt today'. The foreigner told his host, who already was evidently amused of the soups aroma, that he set the bench where they would sit for it's dissolution, by himself.

In no time, the guest had served the meat, side by side with the pepper-soup and they started eating. But, to their unfortunate end, they both started purging and vomiting all the meats they had already taken in. It was this time, when the bachelor started to ask his guest -what meat have you served me. And to his disappointment, only to hear his guest reference to Eke-Ani, the earths messenger, and messenger of the earth goddess, from the greatest Oracle in Njaba.

Now, even as the first thought of the Njaba man was running to it's

shrine for atonement, an immediate struggle already begot the both men's intestines, that after this, they both slumbed and gave up the ghost, lying dead with foam filled mouths.

It was until a third day, when the Njaba man's 'neighbour -'agbataobi', came visiting, in check on why he haven't been seen for couple of days now, and to knowing his whereabouts, that the knowledge of their death became news.

Then, he had called for the assembling of neighbours who had summoned the priestess of the goddess shrine, who confirmed that truly, what was in their plates was the meat of the goddess earth messenger, whose murder alone invokes suffering for the murderer, whereby to feed on it encalls immediate death.

That day, everyone cried so long at this hearing at which in first, they never attempted to believe what their eyes had seen in those plates and pot and now, they asked, what do we do now, in lamentations, they cried that surely they had encured the anger of the goddess, and so on, what sufferings, what punishment is it, that they may be expecting and how if possible, can it be atoned for and averted.

However, in the entire turnover, the Chief priestess got them in the assurance that with some general rituals, that the messengers spirit can be put to rest in its anger, and the goddess, appeased to reincarnate it's spirit, into another offspring.



## CHAPTER EIGHT

The entire village have been filled with numerous numbers of people, all dressed very beautifully with bodies adorned and ornamented and as well perfumed in scents of fine smells. Many were all putting on newly made hair styles, also ornamented and perfumed.

The whole place being majorly blue; which is the people's best colour, that even all the old and young men who made Nsibidi inscription's on their cloths, made them with white dye's, that so it will reflect on the blue. This particularly, on the men, who designed in unique style, and dressed also in their own unique ways.

Young boys would rather prefer loosely tying their wrappers to the waist above their primary wear and underwear than taking it all long either from the shoulders down the leg or from the waist past the knees.

In this fashion, some young and old men alike who still admired and preferred its pattern of design and ease, dressed in its pattern. And on the occurrence of this faithful day, all dressed with either their tallits on, - 'Akwanshi', or using an ordinary wrapper, folded to its form, and hanged round the neck from one shoulder to the other in it's beautification.

Nonetheless, some disregarded this pattern and preferred tying the second wrapper round the waist in different designs and some others, round the lower belly, with some others, simply hanging them upon one of their shoulder with some, hanging it on both sides, crossing it by the necks-rear, placed like a tallit, unlike some, who would instead want the wrapper get to the both ends to meet the other from their opposite end, down in a slide, then pinned together at the lower body.

The chiefs dressed right up to the top, regardless the majority of them never followed their agreed pattern with the days burning sun.

That day, the only thing that identified them as chiefs was either the Ofor's or the big-bird feathers fixed on the red caps they wore representing their office.

The fashion-trending walking sticks, were now the curvy-handle walking sticks, emulated from the redmen and only Azuka and very few others, including dibias were still unflinched, carrying with them their long-rod-staffs all representing the laws still, -on the 'rod and staff'. And based on their spiritual positions, these are specially made with cast bells placed and fixed all over them.

For the women, almost all women had on them, waist-beeds and anklets. And the married among them, ivory anklets. The dancers among them placed cast bells on these beads and anklets, that when they dance, it rings. But unbeknownst to them, all that the watching men were attracted to, wasn't the beads in themselves that they mistake in their flowered believes, but it's arousing wonders, as it made every move of their waist dance very visibly.

For the later class, who were now married and have come into womanhood, or merely a wife, and thus most cultured of them all and also in their dressing, being primarily, the sole primary enholders of their culture and sanity, now dresses in, and of foundations of what sanity the societies next adult generation would most likely become; a degree of self respect and dignity comes in as from that stage of life, and the woman covers herself up from the breast-top, to the legsdown, wrapped in two piece wrapper, one above the other which represents the society with no loose or wayward women, that even if the first covered piece mistakenly falls off, the other remains intact.

Nevertheless, they also tie a smaller one if they like, for their hair ties or tie them down the waist with which one can easily make different designs off with.

Drums were roaming from all directions of walks, gongs and knocks inclusive were also being shot indiscriminately and men that had guns shot aloud.

Masquerades of all kinds, big and small, spirited and non, including little masquerades of and mock masquerades wore by little children to scare their opposite sexes, were all over the place, parading, and in one fun, being it's not acceptance of the female gender to getting very close to it's before, without a supporting man - to bail her off, that so, tames it's temper cause, as it's particular's name implies, -mmanwu, being in same word, 'the spirit reincarnate and mother and beauty of the spirit', all in one. The woman was the death in the spirit world, who now brings them that die into this world, and so, isn't liked by this spirit masks, not withstanding there also existed female portrayed spirit masquerades.

All the large masquerades that walked, headed for the temple, where the gathering to be held had begun -in this commenced celebration of their entry of the pilgrim's month, and Ahamefula, alongside his cult's age-group, joined his group as they marched into the temples gate, led

fiercely and chargedly by their fiercely and heart-skipping looked masquerade, who paraded in the crowded environ, where they will dance through and come to Azuka's before or Nwosu, the head mass-server of the temple, who beckons them by palming their backs, as they bent in greeting, after a brief deep-meaning dance.

Also, just like other advancing masquerade groups, who walked in same sequence to offer their own felicitations with their drums rolling, Ahamefula who carried on him one of his groups own drums, also joined in the maneuvering advancement of his Ekpo group, walking through the jammed crowd.

In no long time, while their group was almost at the front door, Azuka is seen stepping out of the temples door in company of three men, dressed in very rich regalia like high-chiefs -if they were, since it was a kingless kingdom, kinged by God, and no other king is heard of, at least to that south or perhaps, if not chiefs, something of its kind to have had golden crowns put upon by these men. Notwithstanding, while Azuka passes by to escort the men as they left to the place where their entourages were, Ahamefula handed over the drum he carried to another, who carried non, and instantly followed these men -Azuka in particular, while he and Nwosu, 'who joined him walking off the temples door', escorted these men, that so afterwards, he do now present before him, along Abaka who as well he walked with, his pleasant review about Abasi and the amusement, that may come forth with.

All Ahamefula had come was to unveil his revelation of the Efik man and so, he waited by, until the chiefly men waved bye, when he started a major advance towards the three men's before, with the breaking of his big news. But to his greatest surprise, without even uttering a word, now, on the before of Azuka, who he had drawn his attention upon, got a shocking and wholly unwarranted pour of verbal abuse by an already-furious Azuka, that even the other men marvelled at and had to drag him out by themselves from there they stood, to avoid him causing for himself, further mayhem and damages to the one already done.

Stunt and broken, Ahamefula became in one time, both speechless and immobile.

He had called him a product of bad blood and had blamed him, in attachment, for all that had troubled the day.

All this, Ahamefula had no knowledge why, and in that disgruntling manner, Ahamefula's already lasted ultra happiness and this day particularly, was cut short in a most awful manner, spoiling his day, that he went home in that days already early hour, when no soul is seen home; fallen into depression, he fed upon bottles after bottles of Palm wine, that he became so drunk, that he fell into a deep sleep until the late hours of the evening, on his wife's call.

In the case of Azuka, he had miss-spilled another's vexation on Ahamefula; a young man, already popular in his known quest of worthy attainment out of and to erase misfortunes, already brought upon his personal regards and reputation.

This vexation was originally for a younger man than himself, Nwagbara, son of Nnanna, the high priest that reigned, before the unexplainable departures, the revolters and their revolution. Brother of Azuka, who was his junior and father of Nwagbara, Azuka's nephew.

He had staged an on-going pilgrim in the mountain cave of Ukpabi where all of Azuka's excitement on earlier intelligent reports he received of the influx of people of farther villages other than Aro's, once more into Arochukwu few weeks back, that had visited for the pilgrim were.

That day already, he had engaged in a verbal duel with Nwagbara, who insisted that he had no right, giving him orders whatsoever.

Nevertheless, their long lived rivalry had begun years ago, after the mysterious death of his father and the rest of his family in one night of sleep among them all, who slept in their different tents 'on a day like this', situated in the temples field. This created an out roar to the already happening incident in the time, on how a high priest of ancient lineage had departed in such gruesome manner with no living heir to take his place.

However, to be later known of Nwagbara, it became on this note that Nwagbara's mother returned from her mother's place, where she had gone visiting on vacation with her son -Nwagbara, on hearing the news of her husband, the priests departure.

This time already, with no respect to., the deliberate disregard, or forgetfulness of the remained existence of a living son of this now past high priest, Azuka who had already become power toxicated, politicized his rule, and started to have groups of loyal cabals and supporters,

artificially and those later created by himself, who in turn, are in-between delimma, to defend their own ill doings of anointing Azuka, without thorough confirmation of the true extinction of Nnanna's household.

On his mother's rightful claim', -on a suspected deliberate conspiracy; gets faulted in Azuka's claims, arguing in particular that he could not be handed over with the office, in their argument, on claims that Nwagbara's young mother, 'being the last Nnanna had his last relationship with', was only but a concubine, arguing to had never been a time, to their own knowledge, when Nnanna paid her dowries. And ever since, this long lived rivalry, lived, until a suspicious and sudden death of the young woman, suspected to had been operated by the same underground rovolters, as so to quiet her off what they've already established.

Since then, this last son of Nnanna; Nwagbara, had kept Azuka on heat and on his toes day and night, to become his only worthy adversary and not just to that end, had sworn to take back what belongs to him and at so doing must bring to dirt whatsoever that had to do with Azuka's incompetences.

Nwagbara in turn was taken by his father's last loyal friend to Aro-Ikwere, where he got groomed outside other person's knowledge except this last man of his father's time, who Nwagbara still respects, of all top reps; - Abaka, being that last loyal friend.

## CHAPTER NINE

Over three days now, long after the pilgrim's feast, for the very first time in Ahamefula's life, within himself to have totally washed off all that concerns his name's dignity struggle and in general, any concern to whatsoever stateship, even to the least clans meeting, that rather, be like the musicians, who unnecessarily takes no interest in states craftship.

Sitted on a rest-chair, on the cool of that very afternoon, while everyone else had all left the house, suddenly he saw an unidentified temple servant -an Osu, walking into his compound and to him, with messages of invitation by Nwosu, the headman of all servants of the holy temple.

This man had on him marks of a self-dedicated; thus, Ahamefula's thought of dishonour to his rejection of this invitation, while he sat still, bold and unmoved.

Besides, in Igbo, everyone is a king in and only in his own house, that when one thus commands another, gets widely asked by this person, groups or others around, to take that his kingly character home, for that's alone, where it ever begins and ends.

Nevertheless, Osu's were people dedicated to the service of God, or god's, oracle's, temples and shrines respectively, and in their different categories.

Amongst its first and most honoured categories where this particular mass-server', -mass or alter server of the temple, shrines or altars in village of such existence, whose service had become via self-dedication, after which they come to be separated from the majority unworthy populace, particularly those that work inside the sanctuary, and having dedicated 'all' to this service, they become forever exempted from all things of mere men, the craze of wealth and property inheritance.

The other category of Osu's, were those who are persuaded and at such being either a widow whose late husband's kinsmen want to rob off their equally achieved wealth, these group out of this, may dedicate themselves to gods or shrines, to become their properties that so doing, as it is with all Osu, all of their properties now becomes osu, and that of the shrine or temple where she's a part now, that hence forth, no mere mortal breaths the courage to near what's hers, else, becomes an Osu himself, to loose all that is his.



In this same class, comes such parents or grandparents who also make oath to the dedication of their infant babies to either these services and in such cases, such child grows in the midst of Osu's in the sanctuary where they grew and had lived all their life's.

However, happy remains one who grows to love and admire his service, and one who's dedicated in a synagogue in places like Njaba, where the earth goddess hails so much regards to her sacred Oracle that in it's name, they pride. But for them, who may grow to say, 'this was never their lives pleasure doing', then it becomes an unfortunate life living.

Nevertheless, the last category which holds it's worst and in it, the only degenerated, were the slave Osu's, "Ohu Osu's", who are mostly products of heinous crimes, -worst of all rape, incest or murder, and at such made slaves to labour in these places, doing worst menial jobs.

They are the ones whose ears are sliced and under law, into everlasting service of their ill abominations. However, some other persons on crimes of other atrocious and abominable crimes that ensure's capital punishment, many times choose this services over death. They had their own designated areas different from all other people of the society and the other Osu's who lived in the temple or shrine territories.

In their villages, they also make for themselves chiefs and all things that engines a working society, but remained a condemned people who couldn't take any titles other than that of their societal making which is unrecognized outside of themselves, just as well as they couldn't inherit lands outside these territories, and couldn't gather in the gathering of Amadi's – freeborns. However, not all Osu's were Amadi's, but some Amadi's had become Osu.

Unfortunately, they marry and bear children, who later comes under the name 'osu', to suffer the brunt of punishment that they know nothing of, cause for one who marries an Osu, automatically becomes an Osu regardless of which category. And for this particular category, no one outside themselves made associations with, which in the end comes only to affect their offspings, and talk more now, when people still fear the laws prophecies of great omen, yet to befall all, for their sins of either having in-play, hands and giving no voice against the kidnap and trade of fellow humans.

On the part of the honourable Osu who had now left Ahamefula, to go report the feedback of his insisted rejection, uninvited, in a later hour

of the day, had come once more, but this time walking in company of two others, of his Osu's category, led by Nwosu himself, by whose side Abaka and Azuka walked in united sequence. 'All three men who witnessed Azuka's bash against Ahamefula'. Azuka had come to make peace, but Ahamefula will not like to see him.

Surprisingly for his wife who had just returned with the kids from her sewing workplace, the unbelieved observation of Ahamefula's reproach on the visiting men. An un-usual Ahamefula, who was unglad at a besiege of his house by group of this reputable men, that he walked into his room quite, without even making eye contact with them.

In Ahamefula's room, it was only Abaka who took the dare and walked in to meet him where he first initiated a melting cool, over his boiling hate and anger that so, Azuka might as well have a light chance to plea his way out and the forgiveness of his short coming.

On that day past, he had twice been confronted by Nwosu, who had been disturbed of the inflicting damages he must have inferred in Ahamefula. However, Abaka had since refused his calls, nor had he visited the temple ever since, which appropriately wasn't his place anyways.

However, after a while, Ahamefula's vexation had a bit been redressed, and Azuka now stepped into the room on Abaka's signal, sat on the bed by Ahamefula, with a most remorse filled face. This time, Abaka now excused them, leaving the both men, that Azuka may find his way into his victims mercy heart.

'I am sorry for the other day; he began, for the bad things that I said onto you -please, consider it foolish of me and uncalled for', he paused for a while, gently dropped his right hand on Ahamefula's shoulder in check of his temperament at the time -and afterwards, he continued'.

It was all a grave mistake, originally caused by my nephew, the Nwagbara that you know, who we compared with in your child's birth day.

Abaka, he said, pointing to the door, your father's friend and a most selfless clansman, had many times told me about this your Angel, and how good he may be, following you, and on the other hand, your struggle and sworn determination, -only for me to have known less; then how would I make a better Aro if overlook even the most dedicated of us all.

I have wronged you Ahamefula, he said clearly in a remorse-

stressed pattern and I have come to make amend of my wrong, he continued', paused for a while and continued again.

Last time, I had discussed you with Abaka and he told me all that troubled you as a young man and as the -'last returned' of your house lineage of Agwu – that man loves you so very much, and so in our discussion we agreed on one thing worth your whole troubles that will eventually make you a happy and all in one, satisfied man, within a short time period

'The men that you saw with me on that faithful day had come far from the northern villages, and had made dates and invitation of our service for offerings and atonement in their place, which had come off unrests and seek for a revision that comes with, -'Azuka insinuates as he presents a white garment from his side bag and an accompanied purely white ram horn, dropping it on Ahamefula's bedside'. Come to the service of your ancestors, he continued, the sins of your father is neither yours, and we have all sinned in the case, we can all testify that no one is pure. However, and regardless, this is a long way from home, far away from where aged men on sighting you may scream, what is the son of Okoroafor Agwu doing in the service of the sanctuary', he concluded.

At this point, Ahamefula became confused and speechless, his hate wouldn't let his heart smile, neither would his memory excite to the all-butterfly call, he was glad within but it was just a sorrowful time.

That night in this glad state, he had gone to know his wife, where afterwards, they came discussing on the visit of the Osu's, Abaka and the others to the house. And in the time also, Ahamefula having taught deeply in his saddened mood, minutes later on Azuka's invitation and the long distant sail, - travelling just very close to Onicha, which is just side by side to Asaba, Past Orimiri to the west, from where the shortest cut to his uncle's village, he had accepted the offer on the both purpose of this fulfilment, and an opportunity to go bring Nwaubani back into his own care and household, before his next departure for Aba, which surely will barely give him anymuch time on such leave anymore, until his last service.

Based on this, he raises the issue to Oluoma, who at first came in the suspicion that all the while out, that Ahamefula had been with a woman who bore him a secret son, either long ago in Idu, even before his coming to seek her hand in marriage.

Nevertheless, Ahamefula also walked into the childrens room, where they lay and after telling his story with Stewart, repeated it in a tale-style, of a legend from Aro, who saved a young red lad, and is going to bring that boy to give them a second brother.

Agbara was so excite with his mission and all it dealt with and that alone was enough for Ahamefula's departure.

A week later, they had set for Imo river, from where they will sail to Elugu-Igbo, -the northern Igbo territory, in the terrains of Omambala, where around, houses 'Aguleri'. Where in the entire country fences are a thing of common, influenced from where cannot be known, and the value of a man's wealth, ridding past the general Igbo overview to having touched the entire family, far past how many persons have become so wealthy out of the man's own lifted hands and service, but now to how much one has deposited, to the general wealth and well being, keeping them on another level of heightened development and fore-runners amongst all of the others in this arrogance, pride and competition.

For when a rich man brags about his wealth, he gets shut up with the question of how many well doings can to counted of him, and he brags about this well doings and get asked what significant development that he had brought home.

The young comes more arrogant when they touch wealth; they build ornaments greater than any ever seen. And when another wants to become the greatest in this societal show of wealth, just as it is with sacrifices, a more ornament surfaces, and the other become in his force, history.

## CHAPTER TEN

At sambartyon, many centuries ago, in the birth of a south and western exodus from Cyrenaica, many years after the Jewish rising and the fall of the Roman rule, –'when the new peoples first settled amongst different peoples in many countries area of the ruled and sometimes un-ruled by so many powerful empires far up the continent, 'by empires both far and near', under endless cycles of this rules, starting from the fall of one empires rule, to the rise of another, the families of this later-Igbo's had first sojourned amongst the Soninke's of Timbuctu, far north, from where they descended further from, following the hands of sambartyon, towards places also fallen victim of this endless, helpless and powerless reign of rules upon rules of both old and coming empires.

In this area, the people first settled 'before their final dispersion, deep into the land that was prophesied'.

An eastern Arab-kind mixed people, in a land only separated from the ancients of man's creation, by a river from which cross, one steps right into the heart and centre of that country housing this people and the world's equator in it, -at the earths very center, housing the rise and fall of time, situated on the zero's of the latitude and longitude where on another discuss can be also pointed the unpopular, where asides obvious agedness of man's existence upon this very continent, comes several aged maps constant remembrance of this where further north past this places and deep into the deserts where it reads saying, the desert of Seth. Nonetheless, in the later years, they embarked into this historic entry, into birth to the fulfilment of the prophecies of centuries ago, said -"of the land of the people's farther, past the land of the people's beyond Assyria", and to this fulfilment of sambartyon, then came the everlasting marriage in soul and blood.

However, just as it's told about in the stories of the fathers, and in the pages of the kings, -that what is, had already been, Onoja's people, a family of those among the son's of Eri, third of his son's, of Eri son of Gad; Onoja required that the present land in which they dwelt was good for his people and their occupation. And so, what they asked they received, and dwelt there henceforth. But, upon first conditions that himself and group of others in their heiracy, must join in the cross along into the land prophesied, foremost with their brother's, before they return back afterwards to their now place of choice, in relative ritual to that way their fathers before them had engaged, and until their marriages

becomes fulfilled and all of their own gets foot-hold of inheritances. It became on this note in the stay that Onoja and his fellows left for himself another descendant's of themselves, after this cross of Omambala, in their many years of sojourn, until their final departure. This descendants, became the clan and people; –Obosi.

When Onoja's people returned, as told in this ageless stories, they made as it was in the scrolls a twelve-stone altar, visibly on the low tides of Omambala-river; 'a witness of history'.

Nevertheless, and regardless the choice of their settlement from own wider-stock, and its coming age-long effects and consequences of numbers and the fate which befalls a broom stick if seperated from its bunch into a minor; they would in years to come join in the equal share of fate of fellow minority countries by the corner, to the prey of empires and emperors, paying endless tributes from and till its fall, to another in its rise.

From here, thus many endless empires had reigned and still reigning, both short hand and long handed reach rules alike, age long, many starting in the likes of old Egypt and Ethiopia and now the Sudan's and Songhans, some of Arabia type rule, from which influence some many began here-with.

Again, from this Arab-eastern people's also comes another, slave-catchers and merchants who had mixed for themselves, a Moorish blood into the soil of the arid of this continent, who now, -headed for Futa-Jalon; a place in no long time, where this former Arab-slave catchers, now Moorish in this blood mix, will merge by its people's greater populace and rule over all, afterwards to be sacked upon an angry and bloody revolt.

In no time will be coming upon the region, the rule of a new empire after Kwararafa-Jukun. But many decades afterwards to their last might -stands in the end, the Jukun, and after it finally shrinked to the least quarter of it's strength, finally emerged outside its grip-loose many spearheaded kingdoms and official republics, which took the gear into independence, even as they still submitted and payed the full of their tributes to Jukun, which still stands.

Among these independent countries, was the kingdom of Igala, where Onoja's people fell under.



Igala was a kingdom that lived for many years, growing, flourishing and establishing different ways to perfect its rule in same hand and on the other, the continual submission and payment of it's duties from Amagedde -it's capital to Jukun that it was once ruled and now though weakened, rules under.

This continued until the Igbos started making head ways and gaining positions in the kingdoms government, when an Igbo from Idah, Achadu, whose personal qualities led to his marriage to the female Atta, daughter of the ruling Atta, and became patron to her father, and leader of Igala Mella, -"the traditional king makers".

History holds, that in this reign of Achadu, saw the last reign of Igala paying tributes to anymore empires, the period being its first witness of what the Igbo's resolve spirit for freeddom breaths like.

Achadu had refused the continual pay of tribute statues, and when the Jukun army attacked in expedition, Igala beat them to a defeat.

In no time, Achadu became an Atta after the ruling Atta's demise. This began the coming to limelight of that kingdom, followed by Achadu's personal transfer of the kingdoms capital from Amagedde to his home town -Idah.

Its reign was great; however, the rise of a later generation inferred another deep mark in the recite of history once it concerns Igala and this till the end of time, remain, the rise of a popular son whose mother was Nupe, after the kings demise on a leadership tussle between himself and his brothers. It was this son that flagged a bronze canoe with the insigna of office and sailed upstream, farther to his mother's place -Nupe, another part of that kingdom, and among her people who gave him full support, from where he established himself, ruler of Nupe-Nupeko from when henceforth, Nupe remained independent, regardless an already Igala existing government, that it never got attacked, as a result of the Igbo's general respect and character of freedom, and their inherent autonomous being, to had introduced to the world, the autonomous community system.

Nupe's power was also strong and wide-reached and in return while it never attacked Igala, its greatest expeditions spread so far, even into the heart of a later emerged empire, far deep into the western countries, way-far, across the Niger and the Benue river -the Oyo empire.

In those times, history never forgets its sack of the empire's emperor, - 'the Alafin of Oyo', that it had to rule in exile for very many years, until the reign of a fourth Alafin, from the time of Alafin Abipa, the fourth after Onigbogi.

In the land of the people of this great Oyo empire, and amongst its wider people, 'having probably, the greatest population among all that reigned from Nupe down south', for many years, it had reigned until its most northern establishment, from where it also joined in the influence of empire making and as such, across Omambala into the forest territories of this west side of the continent, became the ever first in the establishment of an empire state; beginning from its ancestral heart land -Ife, long after the reigns of the ancient's dispositions in the small village fathered by Obatala, an ancient Igbo himself, when Oduduwa, the great ancestor of the new peoples of the area far across the greater Igbo's land to the east of them, sojourned with Obatala under his good hospitality

"This people are the original of the people's today known as Yoruba".

Their Aku myths tell of uncertain end of Obatala's reign, and in his short cut reign, the rulership mantle became in the hands of Oduduwa, ancestor of the Yorubas, both of the 'first', on their entry and of all engaged or conquered in the becoming of one people, of all offsprings to their becoming of these marriage in tongue and in blood and soul.

Nevertheless, past the arid north, the south was a forest habitat and on the base of their first encounter with this people, the Yorubas referred to this ancient ones; in their interpretation of Igbo, as the people of the forest.

Now, above the office of Oba that was; Oduduwa now made for himself a superior office, 'Oni', and the positions of Oba, he shared to among his various children, head and bearers of the rulership of their different parties.

Many years later, famine befell the land, as the small village couldn't anymore provide for the ultra growing peoples population.

On this note, a soothsayer, -'Babalawo', after the unwise advice of several others on possible solutions to the famine and the containment of their growing size, Oke Itase, Babalawo Agirilogbon counselled emigration.

It was this time in history that 'Ita Ijero' became a place of monement, after the Oni, where he shared amongst his children who ruled upon the entire wider body while lying on his sick bed, from north to south and further west, from Efe, to from there, -to take sojourn and create kingdoms for themselves and for the preservation of their dynasty, remembering Ile-Efe always as the beginning point of all this kingdoms in the histories they would pass to their children and children's children.

Unfortunately, some of this lands had smaller peoples, some others, small countries already in existence. But to those like in the days of the advancement of Iginiuwa, who sojourned in the country of the people called Urhobo, bringing to limelight their existence as well; regardless the many errors of history which refers him as their founding father', with their marriage in a natural relationship, while others only fell into the unfortunate rule by conquest.

For Oyo, unlike other established kingdoms or Urhobo in particular, where the peoples dialect couldn't adapt with the foreign word Oba, thus established another of its kind, referred to as Olu. Oyo got for itself a superior title, 'for an empire needed an emperor', – Alafin.

However, it's empire never attacked its fellow Yoruba kingdoms, not even to think of over-running Ile-Efe, 'to become emperor', in the craze of emperorship, even over his own people. Nevertheless, a later son's generation whose father came far east to dwell in the areas where great Igbo populace held sway fell into this craze of emperorship, starting from his first day of thought, to switch from a kingdom state, to an empire making, that at once – 'came his first attempt to invade home, only to result to today's consequence of its forever castration, among the other Oba's whose corpse are in-ritual, returned to Ile-Efe for burial, singnifying spiritual recognition and remembrance of their origin -but only this Oba, whose case only ended on appeal of castration, that rather than not reunite any of his body parts at all -that till the time, Ile-Efe never receives his corpse, but only his head but his body, -is allowed buried in their land of origin and so the remaining, buried where he ruled. This kingdom was Ile-Ibinu; the Portuguese called Benin, in equal pronounciation as they called the Igbo's, Eboe.

Nonetheless, asides this office of Oba, exists other offices which identified in the Igbo wording, 'Umu-Oba', meaning the children of the Oba.

Oranmiyan was the father of this Oba, his son who he abandoned with his group of entourage, with whom he advanced just like Iginiuwa for Idu where in Iginiuwa's pattern, will soon rule in their greater number advantage of assimilation of culture, villages and populace.

There, on marrying a native girl, he got bore a son, -Eweka. But unlike himself in a mutual manner like Iginiuwa, Eweka having been groomed in the absence of his abandoned father, but just by the parties and relations that came with him and others under his service, Eweka grew to become head-strong and brutal, that he at once levied war against the natives, 'his own half', and in this conquest, subjected them under his rule, from where many years later, he matched into wars for expansion of his abode, and the beginning of a Benin Empire, until his unfortunate march deep west of the larger Yoruba, much bigger than itself, and east to the Igbo's borders, that he had taught a mere segment of small countries, not understanding its government, autonomy or confederations, talk more of being establishments with no kings but very many chiefs, swiftly put a line to no further trial as no inch shrank, except for Idu, his birth place and half's, -in whose battle being the first eye opener and experience of such south, that history still remembers Eweka's rise and half's, -the battle between Idu and the Oba, -Aha Idu n'Oba.

It was the hostility of this Benin that caused springs of central ruler-ship amongst the neighbouring Benin Orimiri Igbos. However, un-Igbo in operation, thus wildly impossible a centralized rule, became all over, an assimilation of the central rule into a developed democracy. Thus, why they became centrally ruling chiefs rather.

Nevertheless, from all these places, where differing societal influences came upon the east, Oyo empire -from which comes the popular name Yoruba', fell after the trend of its war commander in whose treachery he helped enemies invade Oyo, then the last stroke that came, 'the women tribe of Dahomey', whose women manned its army and beat Oyo to a defeat. However for the former, his name -Afonja; Oyo's general commander, who fell to the hands of his own treacherous act, bringing in an already invading jihadist force of dreaded Dan Fodio, 'peoples of that Moorish mix, once headed and now sacked from Futa Jalon', as so to overthrow his own Alafin, and afterwards, rule in the help and enforcement of this foreign army, only to get killed at the end, after Oyo had been sacked in his full assistance, who understands Oyo's entire terrain, better than any army.

The office of Alafin was erased afterward, and till this very day, Oyo reigns under the ruler-ship of emirates.

Notwithstanding, like a coincidence of an unexplainable orchestrated meeting, of the Ishmeal's surely meeting side by side a people of their age old opposite; from futa-jalon came this family and of the superior Emir -Dan Fodio, where jihad spread far and wide even across the existing empires, matched by all armie's of old and new, including the already Islam becoming Hausa who were of greater population as was at Jalon.

Every existing kingdoms felt his match, including Igala that formally, endlessly raided Nsukka and Idoma for slaves up for the Arab sells, and only a few survived un-islamised, particularly of the majority tribes the Igbo's, whose inche of land was never marched and unto its day of finally getting marched, it got told of the army having slept only to wake seeing most of their own dead, and history said that they were bit by tse-tse flies, afterwards, the remaining horse fighters went back to Zaria, supposedly where they had begun. When Igala's Idoma; Idoma whom had become automous of Igala and whom Igede who just like the Igbo Idoma's are no lesser Igbo's than those at the inland not even considering their new year yam offering and festival and origin story telling nothing else but Eri's, but saying he placed his hand on the rivers waterside rock instead of say alter, today, they also have become autonomous of Idoma, all following series of attacks from both past Igala slave raiders and now also came under great attack that after its survival, it came destroying all the many gods it had learnt buckling from its surrounding peoples.

So many of its warriors fell that men were drawn from Agulu-Eri and its surrounding to go make future offspring of the land as the people feared any further inter-mingling and marriage.

It was in this Eri – Agulu-Eri; house place of Eri's heir in Obu-Gad – 'the rest house of Gad' that Azuka had been invited for an atonement ritual and offering making.

Attaining to this, were all the northern chiefs, including the Atta's chiefs and the Atta himself all who had in hand their staffs of fortune – Ikenga

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

Woken by numerous noise from their tents where he had laid the night before, Ahamefula alongside another from Nsukka who he had shared tent with had risen to go wash up, for the coming eventually.

Outside was Obu Gad; the rest house of Gad, specially dedicated by the later Igbo's after their sojourn, in the time of Eri, by the peoples and parties of his migrating group, when the area remained known as the 'area of Eri', Owe-Eri, and situated just few ways, by the side of his second and third seeds Nri and Onoja respectively, the Obu's particular village supposedly Eri now becomes Agulu-Eri. Here, under Eri's own heir's name, Agulu, appended Eri into his continuity. Thus, Obu-Gad, is in Agulu-Eri's inherited compound, and there, everyone who was for the atonement had come.

Coming out from their tent and looking all around the fenced compound, as it was common of fencing in this part of Igbo, which on the rest of Igbo is seen ill, 'as one isolating himself from his own clansmen and family'; Agulu-Eri, just by their side where the rest -house was, were some men, leading into the compound, around the old tree area where sacrificial slain bloods are poured, cows, young rams and few young goats respectively for that ritual and the atonement.

After the wash, the both men had made corporate office wears and headed first for the village square where the involved conflicting parties as agreed are to first resolve their differences before going into atonement for their respective deeds. On Ahamefula's head, he wore the identity Igbo bobble-kappa-flag hat of white, black and red; where white amongst its differing representations stands for freedom, justices, peace including purity, and all that white signifies, the black for their race and defence, and red for their numerous and yet to come sacrifices in blood, that they had suffered in the black of the entirety of their all white believes.

Nevertheless, for the Nsukka man who came alongside the selected entourage of their Attama, from Nsukka, whose village alone on ease can single handedly open vault to everyone of most Igbo origin in relation with their sojourn in the area before splinter; the Nsukka man in his own outfit, preferred a differing colouration, that he simply wore a black and white mix of the Kappa.

Now, deep as it may be, amongst the Nsukka who other Igbos



exaggeratedly describe their Igbo dialect to be something totally out of this world -alien; due to its extreme distinctive nature, that even the peoples of Ezza of whom Effium their brother, as well, just as the Aboh's are to Asaba, cannot be compared with it.

In it, there exist in Nkpologu alone; Ama-Ezike, Ama-Ikwere, Ama-Ukpabi, Owerri, Ikono, Ekpe, Ogwashi, Achalla, Onicha, among others after Omambala cross -all Igbo clans of the northward immigration, that sojourned in it, first after Idah, afterwards their wide dispersions – thus, the many years of their aftermath unification of the remaining dispersed clans differing dialect, gave birth to the Igbo – 'out of box' – dialect it speaks today and almost all Igbo blood mix that it has in one people.

In Nsukka, house's almost all Igbo communities, towns and ancestral existing street names inclusive, regardless how little it's size.

Asides Nsukka and Obu Gad totem, made of the large bronze golden-mixed seal of wisdom, Nsude remains another 'single handed' pointer, to the begining point of the later blood Igbo's and where their journey started, once its question start getting raised.

Now in the square, and sitted in the largest auditorium Ahamefula had ever seen, 'perfectly-patterned' in it's sitting columns with huge trees, whose branches shields it sittings from the sun's hot beat if afternoon, regardless it's being uncommon to hold meetings in such hour, Ahamefula finally took a deep breath, and in the short time, it came upon him a sudden recall of the good old days, starting from one time his grandpa took him along to the temple where he is known in his proud honour of spectacular service that 'Ahamefula ever aspired and ever wished for', -even as a wealthy man, and now, the worst following, that came just few years after this visitation and his grandpa's death.

The descendants of Agwu, sons of outstanding temple worker and in particular heir apparent – Okoroafor, Ahamefula's father, who in his already priviledged born into an already established and very wealthy family, had toppled in his riches and by-passing all of his mates since the past month after his return from their con-federate in Ndikeychukwu from an expedition with a group of 'Igbo-Igala' merchants, clamming that his trade had gone beyond 'yams and more yams', into something way more profiting and sophisticated.

In the time, everyone was proud of him including his father and all his kinsmen and when men that sings make their forbes ranks and praises

in their songs, his clans name comes before that of others in respect to him, cause it is said that when wealth reaches the entire household, then the household can be comfortably called wealthy. 'A kind of wealth yet unpopular, that during his first title taking as a young man of twenty-six, he came all dressed up with beads he bought from that world part, bought far from the world said to have come all the way from afar Indian markets, way beyond its deserts.

Nevertheless, his short lived fame he enjoyed, stayed through this times till the fourth year after his father's death when he returned with two enslaved slave-raiders, after which he literally ended his father's large yam producing business he had inherited as his heir and settled his fifteen servant boys with them, whose service wasn't anywhere close to the seventh.

On the other hand, the two men he had brought home with, he had taken into his household like freemen, married wives for the both and made greatly elevated structures for their abode that although ear sliced, sliced at the top each', he in no time made them so rich, that they in times closest could start competing with most average starting young men of the time, and upon this, people wondered, on what existing secret-affiliation Okoroafor must had shared with this least-honourable men that he lift them to this standards.

On this hand now, a woman from the Efik clan whose half family still remained in Ibom had been visiting Arochukwu for pilgrim since her two years of marriage infertility, until the third, when her seemed miracle got fulfilled.

It was another big-months pilgrim, seven years later, after the Efik woman's delivery of her first girl children and she had visited to make offerings in company of her husband and son of just five of age.

Nevertheless, Okoroafor whose now in his thirties, was already married to two, and a father of three.

All son's, starting from Ahamefula, whose mother was the first wife, and his second wife Chisom, in whose name stands in the singular, 'God is with us', that bore him the other two, just two years back.

It happened on that happy day of pilgrim when Aro was crowded and people dressed so beautifully and danced so joyfully, alongside the sounds of drums playing, knocks of knockouts wasted, gunshot in the

air and hornsounds from ram horns and elephant tusks blown aloud.

Mothers left their kids to join their fellows in a women dance, and fathers danced as well in their own groups in this time of group dancing, then some children and some others on their own side, -who were busy mimicking several masquerades and made its kind of wears to pursue their opposites, acting mighty and alpha upon their female counterparts, who their costume were able to frighten.

It was in this pursuit that Affiong, while pursuing with his group, a group of daring girls, who kept coming back time after time in each chase, to attract more chase, that the sun came dark in the entire village. The whole smile shining on the people's faces, got soured and bore into an un-quenchable anger in the hearts of all, including extremists, who highly hold Aro in high-regards, -in this instant short-cut holy and joyous day, coupled up with certain ill events of past kidnaps that 'enough' became the vexation.

The Efik woman's son had been kidnapped. Dragged into the bush, mouth shut and already blindfolded, as narrated by the other kids he played with. The slim young kidnapper had made a swift head for the thick bush, they all got scared, running helter skelter, then to some adults just by the temple, to disclose this kidnap, with some others, back in the spot after their brief run, crying and reporting aloud their witness.

This attracted a huge gathering among whom the girls mother was a part. And on her discovery that the victim was her own, started screaming and lamenting in sorrow, falling staggeredly on the earth dusts, and rubbing dirt upon herself. She suddenly got caught in a severe heart-seizure, and on the spot, after a brief breath struggle, fainted and never woke, ever.

The entire village got enraged that day, the pilgrim had come to an unfortunate end, and every able bodied man both Efik and Igbo all took up arms in immediate pursuit of the kidnapper, who they caught alongside another, at midnight, sleeping with their three child captives, in one of this roadside rest shields.

It was the 'Ohu' -slave. Okoroafor's highly honoured dishonourable men, he claimed to had been gifted by Uche, his well known friend from Aro-Ndikechukwu who once visited on his first coronation day. A wealthy young Aro-Ndikechukwu, but a musician, whom he claimed was more interested in music than the two slaves who were handed over to him,

after their apprehension, when the two men from Igala, alongside others, got ambushed on their supposed swift night raid in Ikechukwu.

Finding the boy, Arochukwu witnessed a largeface -fallen exodus of a kind that even their fathers never would believe if told, that Ibom was so deserted, that it became costly finding a fly perch afterwards in that Aro community.

The next day, the judges gathered to try Okoroafor and though while his trial proceeded, some very angered people had already gone their own way, to bring his ill gotten wealth to chaffs, that in the mistake of razing and torching this hurts, two of his own, his second wife, Okechukwu and Ikechukwu his youngest son who he named after Aro-N'ikechukwu, -his most preferred place of vacations, died while in one of the hurts elevated tops sleeping. It was when the fire brought the muds falling that their two corpse and that of their mother, was seen falling as well.

It was this time that fear engulfed his remaining family, that his brother Obasi, took Ngozi and Ahamefula and ran north to near by Izuogu, in Aro-Ndizugo for refuge.

Later in the weeks, a feared attack was also perpetrated on Orji his friend, who many in their unsatisfied anger-vent came pointing at to be a sole partner of Okoroafor's investment, this was after the Ohu and Okoroafor's execution and a later death of the second Ohu who was hounded by men he taught he could maneuver during his midnight escape since the execution of his master and counterpart.

Soon into, Nwa-Agbara's father and his entire family slept in their different hurts in the temples residual and never woke. And on the other side of the confederate in Aro-Ekpemiong, where Orji had run to, for the old bishops protection, but just after the bishops demise, his deceased corpse was found lying on an open road path, pierced with two arrows into his heart, cold and soaked in blood.

Nevertheless, while Obasi, on hearing this news feared his continual stay in Izuogu, whose bishop was also very old. But to his sudden surprise, to get the untaught visit of one among the three judges who had condemned Okoroafor, -Abaka, his clans man, who came in the honour of his words of promise to Okoroafor to protect his remaining family and help support his survivor, -a need to undo his inflicted stain on the families honour and his mercy for his sin. However, going farther to

Ndikechukwu, as well deadly for their unknown pursuers, and everyone knows Okoroafor's affiliation with the unit. It was on this that Abaka reviewed an old history of a later descendants of Umuchima, an Aro-priest called Eze Chima and a defunct Idu village, where he referred Obasi to run to, and sojourn amongst its people.

That became, the genesis, about how Obasi became Orisa and Olisa in his both places of stay and work respectively.

The atonement had ended and the cow's slain. Two men who took with them two goats headed for different directions to the wild where they would drop them to an inevitable devour of the sins it carried by wild beasts after which in their return they will wash and be secluded until the evening.

Now, Ahamefula waves farware to his counterparts who headed for Arochukwu while he waited patiently for the loading of a second big canoe, headed straight to the rivers other end.

There in Onicha's river-side market, by a small roadside to the left, Ahamefula buys several pieces of bread he intends gifting the kids on his arrival in Idu -the village he grew in as a child, to take back home, Nwaubani, on the honour of his promise, and like himself back to Aro, where hence, his supposed, as his now become his adopted.

## CHAPTER TWELVE

Almost to Obasi's community, right in the outskirts of a relatively small market situated around the corner but in the moment literally deserted, a huge crowd of people started emerging from a certain inward direction and out to the open areas.

On their lips, as they by-passed Ahamefula who had been travelling all day on foot, they kept making jest and mockery of their ruler and ruling chiefs, calling them thieves in chiefs clothing.

Among the many were three men by his side discussing on the at-hand-matter, when the man at the other end started calling them unfortunate, and how poor they had become since the new red-men's imposition of their anti-slave policy and started hunting all slave markets, open or secret.

In the man's own words; 'if they are now hungry they should instead come open and stop playing smart, that we may consider reasons if to give our own crops and some money to them or not.

Nonetheless, in less than an hour, Ahamefula had arrived Obasi's compound. Now walking in, he saw an old Ozo, adorned in his ichi - shrinkled markings on his forehead, dressed in Tallit and long wrapper with solid Akwanshi inscriptions made on it, as he kept calling – Olise; "which is a Gods-praise name and also beared in name, amongst the people of the country way age long, as old as the ancients before the new -together amongst whom the Ibibio's of new marriage and integration, 'if from the Nsukka's northwards-immigration', and now referred as the Efik's own larger family; in their own dialect bear and call Abasi. The Elugu-Igbo and their southern counterparts bear and call Olisa and Obasi respectively, while those west of Orimiri north and south bears Olise and Orisa respectively.

When Ahamefula walked in to their before, now that Obasi was out, he walked towards them in greeting, bent slightly as they both palmed his back, saying welcome my son.

Obasi himself had gone back in to get kola, alligator pepper and drink after which he started as usual with Ahamefula, throwing this time an endless welfare interrogations.

Today; he had began with Osadebe, to asking about how he wasn't expected so soon and why his out so soon, if he had made a quit. In all



this, Ahamefula gave to an extent, to each of the questions satisfactory replies enough to calm Obasi, after which he and the Ozo now started a proper beginning to their conversation, beginning with some code words Ahamefula never understood, nor was able to uncode, laughing simultaneously now and then, in same manner, then they stopped when the Ozo started a narration of what just transpired in their market place, when the Oba's chief was explaining to them a thing they called 'tax' that just half way into their explanation, the whole people came calling the chiefs thieves and everybody one after another started walking out on them, out of the place, with the chiefs left dumbfounded.

Unlike the Ekpe and their institute which spread and dominate the entire southeast including Arochukwu and farther south, the Ozo's and their Nze counterparts dominated all nooks and crannies of the northern territories with huge influence and prestige dominating the entire area, including Orimiri's north.

In the society, besides the folk tales and other relating primary makings like basketry, blacksmithing, if one's father was one and painting and making meaningful wall and body adornment inscriptions; they existed a description of all two learning and practices, 'the Omenala', being the arts and all its related including culture, custom, laws and traditions, and the other 'Odinala', being sciences and in it, all things metaphysical and religious, and its knowledge which is way distinct and largely known by very highly class like the Dibia's, the physicians and the Afa's respectively in their different areas of knowledge and operations, including the more diabolical decodes of some dibia's.

However, in all of this, the Nze and Ozo institutes and the Ekpe and Ekpo institutes were predominantly top notches and exceptional to the core, being one of the single-combined institutes, organizations and society all in one who alone made another - 'besides all things' - unique writing communication systems, the Akwanshi and Nsibidi's in particular, that unlike a normal art depiction on one's walls, which can simply be interpreted by anyone and on ease, while theirs could alone be interpreted by their own members, 'like the said far Egypt initiate university', making their activities also described secret for their schooling was same; and the most particular of their public comings was their high-cost ceremonies, for the Nze's and Ozo's in particular.

For the Nze and Ozo's, who are more political and luxurious than the Ekpe's and Ekpo's, it remains of note their honourable position from which

all things of the people's general state and live principle originated from; the men who in their philosophy hold that, 'a hungry man cannot philosophise', thus their class of members, the stressful rudiments of initiation, the excessive cost of its ceremony and their end ritual; the seven blade-cut made on ones tongue that as experience proves-witness, became the trace of the Igbos age old philosophy and adage, as well as rule in governance – 'truth is life' in their believe that once a lie is spat off their tongues, that at once, caught in seizure, they slumb and die.

Ever since, this ageless and their rule of numerous governing offices, truth had since become the beginning foundation of the Igbo government and society, that once lost, confidence losses along.

Nevertheless, while they discussed, Nwaubani came walking into the compound.

Fully imblended into the people's own ways, dressed simple like every young boy would, and returning with his already made friends; on sighting Ahamefula he had dropped off the water pot they had gone for spring water fetching to the floor, where it broke to pieces and all at once, ran into Ahamefula, in a deep hug that he nearly fell this last man that reminds him of his captain and father, his and their crews tragic departure.

In no time he fell into deep tears of joy and sorrow, the sorrows of remembering his life's past misfortune and joy of seeing Ahamefula back as he promised to come take him, shielded in his own arms.

## PART TWO

\*\*\*

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN

It's been thirteen years now; Nwaubani have become a fully grown adult and fully imblended in his new country and world, and now was just an Igbo, and all that can be classified of its being. Adventurous, proud, discerning, intensity at its best, and all the goods of the being -Igbo.

His father Ahamefula had long presented him to his kinsmen as his adopted son and even in his many years of stay in Aro, before his departure for Aba alongside with Agbara in the finishing years of Ahamefula's service, he had also gained some status in the society that though he was out, but in his visiting vacations, and year end returns he had made considerable friends and societal impact to have become well known like every other.

For Ahamefula whom had since relaxed on partial retirement, unloading off his shoulders the running of his well doing small ivory and beef factory to Agbara and Nwaubani respectively; and regardless he isn't as rich as his father to be having 'pleas upon pleas for endless services' from starting and mostly struggling young people, all that his little factory had were his two boys who did the whole slaughter, and oversaw the entire trade up north in Onicha and Igala where his trade had evolved to be naturally restricted, as well as his deals and customers, regardless that in the end, following the times reality, most commodities sent to Onicha will surely find themselves, shipped down to Ubani, and now Opobo, in this era when trade still faced south.

Nonetheless, Ahamefula among his people had now attained more respect than many and reaching so above than he least expected, since his early retirement leaving to his boys, and now, but only brief visits to them, and an almost permanent stay in Aro where in this cycle, he got chanced, being fully engaged in the states day to day running. Also his house-hold was now large in addition of two more of his wives, and five more children, male and female, that now, in fulfilment of his name's duty and stake as his father's last survivor, this Agwu's lineage, would not now in his time go extinct.

A year ago, in Idah -Igala, Agbara and Nwaubani had finished their supply of coloured ivories, only to be meet on their way back in a resident area by an endless storm that rained so heavily that had forced them into taking shelter from a man's garden's hut-shed nearby.

Afterwards the heavy rain which had lasted until evening, Agbara who in

his hunger had endlessly been picking the man's bananas and apples on a start off, now fully descends on the whole fruits, beyond what he could pack in his hands which was now unreligious. This he had continued; packing several apples into his bag regardless Nwaubani's earlier warning until he got confronted by a particular girl, among a group of six others, -her sisters, who came passing.

'Who are you both, why do you take off our garden, whats beyond your taking – Ada, the eldest one asked Agbara.

Not-with-standing, their both encounter had developed into a two side deal when Agbara asked for shelter after a first rejection, after which in a quick taught, she got herself in, finding use of them both, to play them the drums which they were earlier walking in to take to a large tree branch nearby to train for a dance step they planned presenting on their cousins wedding ceremony, coming in three days time.

This deal, she had made on with them, agreement to take them before their father, who becomes the decider of their own fate on that part of their deal.

In the end, everything went as agreed and Agbara and Nwaubani were in no long time, before the girl's father, whom having weighed their story and sincerity, made another path with them, proposing to pay a considerable amount, and again, his hospitality, in the agreement that they do stay on, till the fourth day after his nephew's wedding ceremony, that they go plant yam seeds with him, which was no woman's crop, and highly stressful for himself doing most times, most of the job's alone -in his house of only girls.

Fine as it was, afterwards, since that day and the next two days before the wedding day, Agbara and Nwaubani had become fully employed drummers, playing each day and hour, as the girls danced to the beat and practiced. All in the time however, Ada came staring at Agbara and having clashes of endless eye contacts; she have had likeness for the young man, that sometimes even when no one was around she called on him to play for her while she danced all alone to her fantasy.

Ada was her name, a general first daughter name as is to Obi for the male- child. The first of six other girls upon one man who to the marvel of many, still never regrets his situation, rather makes pride of their coming and future attracting wealth to come with future in-laws and on a personal, not of him being the last boy child of his father who

had eleven sons, he since long found for himself one answer to any of his friends who raises questions on need for him struggling to bear a son or heir. Stating that he still remains last of his father's eleven son's and bearers of their ancestral name, among all who had already grown son's, married son's, grand and great grandson's, and so, why should he still be in rush, since he was no where close to shouldering that obligation, neither will their name ever, as it is, ever in a blink, go extinct considering their large family, in it, where his own father who had come from a house of twenty-four, where nineteen were boys.

The most interesting days of Ada'h' and Agbara's relationship was on that day of the wedding ceremony in the numerous times when she caught Agbara's round moving eyes, stucked on her waist as she danced and danced, then another on the fourth day, when they had gone on the deals yam farming after the ceremony, in their farm, very far, away from home.

It happened on that faithful day while they all worked and the job was almost finished, to now as well gather some fruits and vegetables, except of cause the gleanings, that Ada's mother asked Ada to go home and prepare them pounded yam which they will descend upon the moment they all returned; in the time, she asked for Agbara's assistance, claiming that there was no small firewoods in the store and in the main, - will be needing his assistance in the breaking of another into useable sizes. This she was approved and she left with Agbara.

Nevertheless, alone in the big house, they both had gotten into the mind of the others obsession and before long, Agbara was already caressing all over her, and throwing her against her bed, moving his arms round and round her waist in search of the loose of her cloth.

It was a long noon, and great quarrel erupted between Ada and her mother the next day after Agbara's departure, following her discovery of disposed burnt yams at the kitchen's backyard.

Unfinished, Agbara had returned early the next year on his honour and promise to her to make dowries on her pride. The equal as is paid for a virgin girl, just as he met her and also considering the Igbo's beautiful tradition of fatherhood which on another hand, giving every woman a promise of marriage, that the girls father automatically becomes the father of any child she bears off wedlock and every man who wants claims to his own, and father his children, must take responsibility in -



marriage.

In the twice meeting of Agbara's kinsmen with Ada's, Agbara and Ada in the days later became the latest couple after which she put to birth in less than nine months, a baby girl, that it got people wondering how she put to birth so quickly even without reaching nine months of carriage in her pregnancy.

Nevertheless; Agbara had become a father to a girl child, of equal beauty, even better than her mother, his wife, and on that faithful day of her delivery in Aba just before his house, he had raised for himself a high tent of stones and in a religious offering, sacrificed two white bird fowls on it.

In no time, his next door neighbour who was just on his way visiting from his own compound on seeing Agbara, 'where in his own compound he had on it a very tall, and wide stemmed Udara tree', comfortably situated at the compounds extreme corner -this he had long converted into a shrine and deity all in one, but since his knowing this young man from Arochukwu, 'Agbara', had kept insisting against this Aro, on how this natures are intercessors to God, and how man's dirt had distanced him from his unblemish maker.

Long in the time, Agbara had been reiterating on how his being deceiving himself, thinking a tree will send and say his prayers to God. However, Agbara in his own turn, is surely about to get it hot, -engaged in a way long toughened argument from this man's own end

Next week, Ada's mother will arrive on her visitation, groom, care and assistance of her breastfeeding daughter.

It's Omugo, and a strong culture in the root of every infant Igbo's upgrooming.

## CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The year have come to the last month and very large and mega cities like Aba, all composed by people of different villages were beginning to get scanty and smaller by the day, following out floods of families who had travelled to their various villages to go celebrate the new year and make new harvest with their families and kinsmen and so, relatively only few people were remaining in this supposed over populated cities.

For the Agwu's in Aba, Agbara had first departed with his young family, followed by Nwaubani in the later days of the month.

The last day was when all old yams are decomposed from the barns to free them for new yams in same hand -the year is begun with new yams, while the old gets thrown to the goats.

In Nwaubani's return few days to the finish, he had come setting numerous heavy sound knock-outs in the sands to be knocked on the years cross in the coming days, whilst Agbara on the other hand who had returned way before Nwaubani had kept announcing upon everyones ears, that no one should get close to Ahamefula's gun, in his claim that they were fully loaded, awaiting the nights eventuality.

On a faithful morning while Agbara and Nwaubani and a couple of other friends had branched from the wise men's tough discuss in a small square, to a bar, close to the village square, where they kept discussing on Mazi Emeka, 'one man among this wise men, who at the other time had being confronted, that he fell on many severally challenged fronts, on his arguing the already existing and highly regarded adage and philosophy -in the wise-saying; 'that what an elder see's -'perceives', that a child will never see it standing even upon the tallest Iroko tree', and had on that very day made a deep-saying that broke the entire gathering into laughter, when the debate got into intensified heat, between himself and Kalu, the moment he said without flinch – 'why ask a woman to close her legs, do you know where she breaths from', that today, he had made another crazy adage, not known either to be addressed dirt talk, or an adage, as being in the both mist. The young men discussed and laughed aloud, and in mimicks, making jest of all that transpired, until a sudden hostile crowd came passing for the next compound. However, seeing these by-passing moody crowd, then Chikadibia the dreaded witch doctor, they all suddenly rose to witness for themselves, first-hand what

wonders Chikadibia has got doing this time.

Nevertheless, in that compound as they walked in, observing like every other, was Chikadibia's four sons, carrying on their shoulders – the corpse of their only sister, a young girl of nineteen, whose beauty as said can be boldly stared before the both eyes of any goddess of beauty if any, and still stand a shine.

It was an unfortunate end as such, and the crowd were mostly filled by young people, all who had joined on their way past.

Following the incident, as her corpse was being carried by her sub-conscious brothers, who had been carrying the corpse from the thick bushes where it was found, unstopped till this very time, over Chikadibia's spell on them, -soonest while they staggered tiredly walking from one huts direction to the other in that compound that they had come into, the young men simultaneously ends on, before a particular door, dropped the corpse before it and all fell off the spell to the ground – exhausted. At this time, great out roar came from the crowd, -Onyeka had caused her death.

Stories of her death told that she had been missing for days alongside another when the two girls were returning from the stream – where they had gone to fetch spring water for drinking.

In the occurrence, witnesses being other girls on the road who took to their heels, immediately after some grown men jumped off the bush to seize the both girls, had emphasised on the men's followed bush path, where Chikadibia led his sons to her finding and where in the thick bushes he found her lifeless, beaten to stupor, probably during a fight withstanding a known person – Onyeka, whom she just left for another who had got her betrothed two weeks ago.

In this, no one had seen Chikadibia as angered as he is, not even in his conflicting times.

He is an ever powerful witch-doctor and likely feared by all and sundry, including his equals in their crafts of spirits, who never ever, underestimates his resolve.

The last man who went into duel with him after his step brothers sons had come complaining to Chika on their uncle's maltreatment toward them, was Ebere.

Ebere an arrogant proud man having encountered with Chikadibia after a particular kindred meeting when Chika met to ask of his goodness towards reports from his late brothers children, Ebere had taken offence to Chika's approach and so a loud quarrel broke between the two men.

Being a far travelling merchant, on his next trip to Opobo, where they now sell to agents at the delta, he had travelled for Kalabar, where he purchased some powerful charms of 'black magic' that so, on his encountering with Chika in the upcoming clans meeting, to finish his unfinished business, on his vexation to Chika's audacity to even have had a second thought of confronting him. The black-magic charm he had gone for, that if push comes to shove, he would beat Chikadibia to a fall.

Nevertheless, the d-day came to pass and an over-serious quarrel that turned to issues of threat over threats had erupted between the two men, and suddenly, Ebere brings out of his side bag, his charms powder, spoke some words over it and blew it against Chikadibia – three days later, Chikadibia grew so sick and his belly swelled so badly that his wife even contemplated seeking for Ebere's mercy. However after series of his incantations in his front house shrine, a day later, Chika was back to normal, and the next week following, Ebere's kinsmen were seen carrying Ebere into Chikadibia's compound for plea. His body so sick and darkening. Swollen like one filled so full with water and most disgracefully – Ibi, -'had testicles growing so very large that they said when he sat, it covered the sit and when he walked, it swept the floor that he walked on' – thus, why they had to hold it on with a huge double lined wrapper tied round against it.

In the time, it was heard that Ebere had been visiting a Kalabar witch-doctor for possible cure since it's hidden development and until the last day, that he never accepted to go pleading in Chikadibia's house and so his kinsmen choose to carry him by force.

This day, anger was visible in his eyes, and for a man who single handedly challenges spirit-masquerades to contest in many of this ceremonial days that they appear, just for the fun of it, everyone obviously watched to see in this helpless period, what at the time, Chika will do about his loss, and the run away murderer.

In no time, he asked for a horse search, and while Agbara and his groups being the last arrived and set of able bodied young men, standing

together by that compounds outskirts, that almost every other eyes seemed like though they were stared against them to go onto this gathering, -they had left out to houses of particular merchants in the area, where in the end, they came up in their number of five, only four horses. Agbara, Ukaegbu and Nwaubani dragging one along, and Omeka, the only good rider, riding his in.

Nevertheless, while they walked to present before Chika, in an unexpected and inexplicable way, just at once on his fastening arms by this horses side to the men's obvious awareness as everyone watched, all in little knowledge to this dibia's metaphysical acts, - stuck with swords and an arrow in one, all with which, after he had cut a string of Nwakaego's hair, touched it upon his staff then touched this staff upon them and the horses foreheads after he had asked they climb the horses, both themselves and the entire horses fell under spell – and all at once screamed in the chaos joy noise of horses and immediately took to their heels; that both the subconscious men couldn't take hold of. And through days and nights, they ran far south without stop, until in a wood forest, few meters to the Imo-river along a nearby stream in those woods, that empties into the weighty river. With their spelled self, got a quick sight on some dealer men, among whom were two redmen and Onyeka in their midst, that immediately and uncontrollably, Ukaegbu released an arrow from his horses back, and just as perfect as its aim was, went straight for Onyeka, and the other dealers started running helter-skelter, leaving some blindfolded girls, three in count, who surely, they were dealing on.

However, in the directionless run, while their attackers still advanced in high speeds of the horses, even in their gradual regain of consciousness immediately after Onyeka's death, another two of their own fell to the swords and for Nwaubani, he had chased further the escaping redmen where he held them to an end road where they turned facing him powerlessly, only hoping for a chance to jump into the canoe which unfortunately the man who smuggled them in on sighting Nwaubani's approach had immediately jumped off the canoe – straight below the waters, within seconds, disappearing into thin air

Nevertheless, on gaining better consciousness, and regardless his zeal to eliminate this evil and agreed outlawed perpetrators, he found himself interconnectedly restrained, that on a try and another, he discovered that his inner-self wouldn't just let him strike these redmen, that in the end of this deep rooted restrain, turned and left, and in the second, his mind got

stucked upon this his meeting of people of his own pure race ever again.

When asked of his bravado, he announced of himself to had slaughtered the men to bits, and had thrown them into the water for the fishes to as well join in the parties feast.

Nonetheless, on their way back, at a time when the wide road got separated into paths by littered elephant grasses, and the four men passed on, following particular parts of the two ways separated paths, a tall – quick snake came running past Agbara's path and crossed his own before, and still in it's quick run, ran quickly into the thicker bush by the side.– 'It was sign of bad omen, and the rest of the men got stucked, looking to Agbara in wondering faces, who as well in his fear, watched back in exact expression.

After their return, the entire community celebrated their bravado while they played with Onyeka's head they had brought home with in-prove.

Throughout the time, Ahamefula had become so very proud of the man he was, and this children of his who he believed, 'trained in his state-ships activeness and patriotism', where for him, he had become the proudest father among his mates, out of his son's follow of his footstep in the making of a better name; as he taught best.



## CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Finally, the new year had come, starting with the new year's offering of first seeds, then the festival. The yam, being superior of all, and the 'king of all crops', in the new year harvest festival begins here in Arochukwu, from a first cut of it by Azuka, who launches the first yam.

The offerings had already commenced since morning and while people reserved some for friends and well-wishers, -the first, they organized, to be headed for the temple, all incensed and perfectly arranged in basins and baskets.

Ahamefula's own household was not just filled with baskets of new yams, but also numerous garri's made off processed Cassava's, just as those who come with corns made oats.

In the basins, after the incense are made and salt sprinkled over, red oil is also sprinkled all around and in some, pepper dropped just by its top corners. None-the-less, people who took goats and sheeps with them, even cows or harvests of their fruit gardens, as well as non processed cassava's, also made some of this holy things upon them, particularly the grains, likewise the animals, marked with red-oil sprinkles.

In the coming hour, the festival will begin and in the temple, unlike every other villages whose festival holds on their squares, that of Arochuwku begins from the temple to the square, then afterwards as general as it was, the rest of the days hours after this, becomes so much merry after merry, food after food, - 'all yams in the entire Igbo on that particular day' -that how much the yam is significant in Igbo, it's taste and spiritual significance, cooked in all kinds, including the pounded and the porridge.

So much meal happens to go down on this days -bar none, and like the remaining people in Aba and even those in their villages who had got their friends or relatives invitation to come celebrate with them supplementing sometimes, they should come witness for themselves the level of expense at their own side, or on their choice to meet along to spend that day together; in Aro, every visiting family confirmed to the excesses of Arochukwu's lavish on this particular day.

In Eziokwu's own house, it was said that the half of his entire visitors had to sit at the very edge of his Obu and in same place ate from and the others from the other extreme. The yams were so much that Eziokwu had to make that special tray and table for them, that it stretched from

one ending corner of that large Obu to the other -that the men couldn't even shake hands across board.

None-the-less, all the old yams afterwards got dislodged in the goat's house.

In the months later weeks, when the second month was close coming, Nwaubani came leaving for Aba to go prepare for deals he's made for the years sells. Early the next two mornings, Agbara being late, 'as now a family man', also departed in cause of same trade deals.

On getting to Opobo, where they lived in Aba, everywhere was scanty and quite. Agbara settles his wife and daughter Mma, in the dark of their house where Nwaubani had left closing all windows, and now Ada rising to light their lamps -when he walked out, taking a short stroll around to check and observe for himself, why the area was that quite and no one seen at sight. On the walk, into the Ehere village of extended Aba, comes forth a large number of the Opobo street members majorly, amongst whom Nwaubani was part of.

Meeting Agbara, - got briefed on their walk, that they had gone to see for themselves what had become of extending Ehere just to the end where majority of its shops and factories were located.

Inside the house, they discussed through the night while the lamps burnt and morning the next day, just as speculated earlier, the remaining returnees from Ehere came walking in mass, into their own streets -in Opobo for refuge.

When the people looked at their despaired and fear instilled faces, they where forced to make a nights gathering, to set out and forward, proactive measures to defend Opobo from all eventualities.

Nevertheless, in the time run, this unknown people kept advancing and from their end, huge pills of smokes are seen from all parts they overrun. Smokes from shops and factories of the over ruined street once they take it over, as testified by these endless batch of refugees.

Soonest as they approached, it will one day become Opobo's turn in the fair share, and if it is that the affected village had its indigenes involved in the proactive measures, these attacks, with Opobo's who are known headstrong when it come to conflicts, after frictions between their other part at the estuaries with the reds, surely, these city residuals in Opobo, surely have much jobs to being security proactive.

Finally the long expected day had finally come to become.

Into Opobo, the masked men advanced, torching and razing shelters by the street side and some houses located at the street entry while they advanced, but unbeknownst to them, they were being ambushed, and unfortunately on coming very closely to the first factory of that street, being Ahamefula's, immediately, got loosed into the ambushers wrath.

The factory being the first was like a point-blank to them, and in this loosed hell, just like a serpent hiding by the wall corner awaiting to strick, javelines started flying from all directions and all at once scores of arrows and gun shots seized the nights silence.

In a brief, a combination of all types of outburst came emerging from their hiding corners. Agbara's first struck had become the first witnessed, having been closer to the razers, jealously by his father's factory, where in his peculiar strick, his matchete was clearly seen sticking deep into a man's skull and as broad as the view was, the poor man fell instantly.

It had been the men's group who all the years past; beginning from another major expansion of Aba, following a new year of servant release and settlement, when new factories where laid for construct, for this graduated apprentice. Then, this had earlier resolved to riots and property razing and torching in a quest to frustrate the taught invading people as some locals perceived them, and the people in return had known them as razers.

In the tone, it was now obvious that they were exploiting the moment to sack the city, but on advantage to the general Igbo character, though in its bad, the residents of this places, never took those as being relative threats in the start, that when one street suffered this attack on an average or little, the others come by, instead of seeking proactive resolves, came pricing their now ill-fated factories and shops, in the aim of expanding theirs, and on matters to the later endless raids, starting from the ever first victims, most kept insisting that on no account would one wake up just to attack his neighbour's', except on an avenging approach and so, the affected should go seek peace with whom ever that they must had offended. Today, their only saviour had become the Igbo's character of emergency management.

Now, while the whole incident had become real, and Opobo which is separated in two by the crossing Imo river at Ogbor hill, from its other half which is seven times more richer than the former, and constitutes of major old dealers, the entire Opobo gathered this time since the successful ambush by its other part, consisting most young dealers, with rich and newly settled apprentices; had started for themselves in pro-active preparedness, for another show down if push comes once more to shove.

Happening in that time, all men blessed in the arts of smith and craftsmanship had come into work, into the making of long shields and helmets, swords and arrows -particularly the Abiriba's.

Their last resort was to keep vigilant and having mounted watch towers, are preparing for all eventuality since they are now in the position of the first defence.

## CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The people sing when they work, they sing when they farm and even in times of lamentation and other times like victory.

This time it was war, and men gathered all around, arms of different kinds, patterns and shape and on themselves also, fastened swords, bows and axes.

For four days now and another, day break and night, the expected counter attack have yet not commenced, that the people began lagging off-guard. However, still knowingly to them their equal genetic difficulty to dwelling on with, including the management of failure -thus making it a no no in the society, they still lagged on, even when in their depth of hearts they knew for sure that the razers of nights before must surely come, and better this time in want of a re-encounter, instead still, they depended on their great number and the watch towers they had set very highly above.

Nonetheless, work was already resuming and shops reopening, and the people, now being at their lowest state of lagacity, when all the people did was fasten different arms kind, like say on mere psychological reminder of a hostile period. This remained so until the unbeknownst, believed nor expected day that shined, when the new years harmathan cold chilled into the afternoon; that day came to pass and in their own midst, the razers took them un-engaged, when suddenly fire started raising from every factory that was in the area, big and small alike, while people ran in disarray to the other cross of Opobo where they eventually came to the full notice of the actual happening. Then, Opobo was already up in flames. -Opobo have been over-run.

In vengeance, they saw the razers, 'this time unmarked', slaughtering stored elephants and cattles, to a bloody waist in very gory ways, that so the people knows what it feels like, losing what one termed precious.

Nevertheless, from the other cross whose residents watched as the other half was disseminated and their investments brought to dust, they; the housers of the greatest numbers of factories and beasts in all of Opobo, became terrified and in this shock, all other peoples particularly, those residing in the road after them, Enyi-road -elephants road, all hurriedly came forward as so to partner for a stronger defensive against future assaults.

Soonest, a meeting of war was called in a factory by the Ogbor-hill's river side, which in the nearest future will inevitably be becoming a front line defence, against the victory excited razers.

In the meeting, on that very night of the assault's incident, had in it both residents of the very area, and angry refugees from the fallen section of Opobo.

'No they have to go, we do not want any such loop-holes to happen again; people from Opobo's fallen territory by the seperating river cross, had raised their voices, insisting that no native should be allowed in the security meeting and in same time, blaming them of having amongst them, persons in alliance with the razers, thus their ease to had penetrated in through.

In the end, the natives were sent out even in this face of daring loss upon them, pushing the entirity of the natives into a sympathy heart for the razers, including disbanding the Abiriba's, who were smiths and thus needed in times like this, and more now, when most arms formally produced en-mass at the other side, had all been lost to the razers, who now have under their possession, greatly more arms than needed, and so a need of much quantity of new arms in the defending territories against the razers, in whose own free possession, they can go for a long ride.

The security meeting had ended, and in the following plans, the bridge connecting the two territories got broken and under selected commands, the men made sharp spikes on the estuaries and layed siege at its mouth.

All through the night, they had slept quite with an eye open and very early the next morning, they got woke by their commanders to keep in position.

It was an Eke market day, in the early hours of the morning, when the dew fell so heavy that one could hardly see from a distant, out of its accompanied blur of the mornings harmattan, thus, one cannot see another from a significant distance. Almost to their defence line, a first canoe had been sighted by their tower man, and in just same minute as he blew his ivory horn that the defenders may rally, emerged at once and in full, the entire view of the razers large fleet of over six-hundred fighting men, approximate in their countless canoes -never had anyone believed this referred torchers and razers could amount this count.



Now, on this immediate command from their own commanders, the entire groups all quickly moved to their positions, from where they will commence defence. Nonetheless, bad as it spread, from the far west coast of that estuary where the razers first company had landed, a sudden state of confusion and withdrawal is seen amongst their defendant team of that west coast, and so many were falling, just in few minutes of fight, and while the razers advanced like say -on ease, like they had all the arms and killing will, and their rivals nothing; the defenders lost both men and their line of watch in-continual.

In no time at the other corners, the other fleets were now much closer, approaching further to the shores where they waited in defence. However, almost to their reach for a close up on the command on the defendants side, the archers started an endless rain of arrows and when the men finally landed, sporadic gun-shots broke out, and overtook the peace of the beach and air, with smells of black-powder hovering all around, -in all assault only to face same fate as their west-side counterparts, which started to seem very un-natural, as the razers matched forward without fall, even in their badly wore armours, with most no bullet/spear proves, otah's -breast plates, nor even helmets, like say they had become immune to death.

In the last hours, when the battle surprisingly came to an end, the defendants managed to trigger the razers into an unexpected withdrawal, courtesy of Agu-iyi, -an old time experienced field man and Odogwu -'war captain', who had left the frontline with some men for his shop where he arranged for knock bangers and hot oil that they laid with long cloths through, when their inevitable retreat was almost becoming reality, he lit it up with wildfire that in his operation and in a compliance with the knock-bangers then hot oil which came pouring scatteredly and all around endlessly against the skins of these mostly vest unconcerned razers, firstly pouring against the closest advancing of them, most who were on bare-bodies and no tops at all, 'most crazed of their front fighters', a considerate restrain came upon this firsts, and on sympathy of their general commander, asked for their withdrawal, and then, their ivory horn came blowing.

Nonetheless, having the whole days encounter looked unnatural and magical, a sense of shock and surprise was observed of the razers, on their later infliction, after which their commanders in attitudes of unbelieve asked them back.

This was how Opobo came to have a lucky breathing space, on that unnatural day, that it almost would have fallen.

Aguiyi hails from Mbaitolu in Owerri, and also an Opobo, from riverine Opobo, where his mother hails from. Formally, he had joined in series of fighting between his village and slave raiders, and on a most significant of them, in an old battle in Opobo, where naval ships came bombarding this of their clans village, when from that half, came by, even to far away Owerri -his paternal and then-resident, in seek of both monetary and volunteer assistance when he as an Owerri, from both where Jaja hails from and also an Opobo, on hearing this call, joined in line.

His known name –'Agu-iyi' is a bravado title, which since had become the name he's come to be identified with, that he got many years back, after he first returned home with a live crocodile -Agu-iyi, being 'aqua-leopard'. But on the ceremony and coronation day, and since the crocodile isn't a beast you skin its flesh nor face from which the Isi-Agu - Leopard head wear of brave heart is fired and made from, Aguiyi set for another walk into the deep forest, only to return on that day while the coronation itself was ongoing, with a slain female leopard he had gotten down with his most effective gun of the times trend, newly introduced by some sea traders called English, whose trend began just six months before, when Awka blacksmiths finally became first brokers, to finally break the deep secret behind its manufacture, which led to its limitless wide-spread, so quickly that the owners themselves started to have a rethink, with their sells sharply reduced, that they had to leave in quest for newer products. -That was two weeks before the tragic story that broke of an Awka merchant who had gone in on opportunity excitement, following the English's vacation to the bights part, when one day, he had come to sell to the Portuguese, sampling a type of theirs, of exact replica, and it's model of the new English at the same in his manoeuvre to convince them into reasons on buying this latest power-might arm, having taught to himself a special opportunity, seeing redmen still on old outdated arms that supposedly are supposed to be beholders of the newest as always, only to had interlocked into series of misunderstandings, between himself and this Portuguese, then came the wide spread story of the murder of this Awka by alien countrymen, on their own country soil.

On the side of Aguiyi's return, there and then, the leopard got skinned and its skin fired and the Isi-Agu cross wear, down past his chest and his

back in addition of his own unique of this chiefly, camouflage, bravado and as well luxury wear, either gotten in gold or fist as he got his, got made of it after which he was coronated, in this title just at once, next after another, who had been in one hand titled Eze ji -king of yams and Onye Oti Igba -the great drum player.

'Mmasiri, was both an excellent farmer and fine drum player in one hand. And that year, it was his wonderful calm melody that gave his community victory over the other long winner of that part of spirits coordinated play, during their last masquerade feast'.

Aguiyi himself, became an Odogwu in Opobo, where he got his first red-parrots feather, after their third assault, after he had killed a redman of rank and returned with his rank and helmet -this, he now wears in every skirmish and battle, including this on going, here in upland Opobo.

'.. Even now that this gun of mine, very expensive, is pure Awka, that I had specially bought, when a first bought from a local blacksmith, failed to kill an Elephant on instant -a man laments in the factory-converted hall where the raised army now gather in-meeting and plan outsketch.

I too, another came crying. I threw my best most perfectly aimed shot since the fight and as good handed as I was, my javelin went straight for and hit a man's heart, but he never fell, nor did the javelin pierce him through. Instead, the razer picked it up in excitement, amused off some kind of doubt overcome, over whatsoever that I can't tell, and now further embolded and in high felt energy of untouchability, carefully aimed and shot my own javelin back at me -he laments.

'Amongst the people had aroused suspicions of unforeseen blackmagic, used by the razers who had fought like spirits, like though they had become immune to injury or death, so much to the acknowledgement of all, that while one may still be worrying in doubt on this impossibility, only to enter the hall and come upon the entire room discussing exact testimony.

One man confessed that he almost got killed by one he himself had insisted killing, who had engaged him in a fierce duel that he successfully struck the man hard with his axe, only to get an immediate push -to the ground, from a supposed hit man, whose belly he had just hit with his big headed axe. This man he said -a supposed hit man, who only grounded in pain and still unblieving to him, never bled nor died, but

still in his bold state and most energetic feeling of untouchability. However, while the man bent as so to finish him off, he had picked for himself a riverside rock in defence, which he hit on the man's foot that he came bleeding even as unexpected as it was. Upon this pain, the man had bent low, in the cause of this pains imbalance, when he used the rock on his skull and chest, to the man's quick fall, afterward he climbed upon and with the stone in both hands, finishing him off.

In his testimony, this man had come once more, presenting to the believe of all, evidence of the sea rock filled in blood in testimony of his serial kills and bleed cause, telling repeatedly how he no longer went back to his fallen axe and the sharp rock, he held onto till the very end.

Soonest, Aguiyi who had become the day's champion, came narrating a time in his early years, when he had once seen crafts as such. 'In Opobo, in his volunteer to fight against the red-navy when, he claimed to had among others for the first time in his life, seen men in their different canoe groups' where in their morale chant, some men came using their swords roughly on their bodies, forcing to cut themselves open, but to no avail. However, in all of it, a particular canoe which had in it a greater number of this magicians, sailing just by theirs, got hit by the redman's canon fire causing bomb, that to no avail, following their earlier magic show, both their canoe and body parts got blown into parts; one body part separated from the others, and that remained the greatest eyesore of that wars tragedy, from where also, in which experience he had gathered this fire and boiled oil pain, to scatter the days 'becoming' immortal fighters.

After the fight; and still gathered in the factory turned-hall, while the women around came attaining to their wounded outside of the hall sides, a plan-B had erupted of a total breaking and sharpening of stones into weapons, drums for boiled oil, and the sharpened stones, merged in arm-form sticks to replace the blades, following the evidence of the stone man's testimony, to now become their held-onto primary defence weapon, followed by these set out over-boiled oils, all off their continual discussion.

Nevertheless, after few elderly men came confirming Aguiyi's Opobo battle story, their shared inflictions and an agreed possibility that only a knock-kind of the redmens canon, -powerful weapon, can be trusted in a sure countering of the razers in their own black-magic, and in one hand, while they still counter-argued on the possibility of manufacture of

anything close, even by the world renowned Awka, then came Nwaubani's voice from an end of the left corner, narrating a dissolute forgery part of his story, claiming that he had seen these canons before, and had touched them even, and possesses few experiences as to how it operates, based on thorough look and observation on the ship in his story, and that regardless what they maybe thinking, or their taughts of his age inter-connecting with their last conflict knowledge, and how long a war between them and any red people ever happened, for him to had actually seen the inside of a naval ship, talk more he by the time was merely a child, regarding the claim of this account, when even those who had ever climbed the slave ships never climbed down; that if given the privilege that he will so much end the razers madness, who had destroyed his livelihood and trashed all the years big trade deals.

On this, murmur filled the house in unbelieve, cause no one ever had made such, not even a bang-knock maker, making a thing that in its bang spits fire. However, over all doubts, Nwaubani got awarded this contract in promise of fulfilment, cause of root however, the people believe in possibility, change and impermanence.

In his team of four, he had personally selected Agbara his brother, for the fifth man, and between the two cattles that they will be travelling along with for the Imo-river from where they sail into the northernmost Elugu-Igbo; upon these cattles were contributed donations of twelve large sized ivories, highly estimated to way-out, worth and even over pay for whatsoever involved service cost, that surely will drive any smith once promised, deep into his craze of extreme abilities, way beyond whatsoever ingenuity he ever had taught of himself. For it is said in one of most Igbo popular adages and philosophy, that -'give a physician so much that he so dear desires, he will walk right into the evil forest, even to its depths, in search of herbs.

Akwa, remains unarguably the place of very old irons and smith, blessed down from heaven in its flesh and spirit in the craft of metals as said in myths of the Eri's new Igbo, of whom Awka had existed therein and advanced Smith's way before their incoming and the then later marriage.

The following day, the men departed for Akwa.

## CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Now in Awka, the ancient land of abilities in smiths, bronze casters and similar talents of remark, who had made a second off every one thing the north, and now the south had come in with, of irons and bronze.

In the run also, they remain the new products foremost purchasers, that just few months on the sales lists, they had already began an encroachment on direct competition with the still penetrating product, giving it no space of further sales after which their replicate of the alien-product dominates the country's market, in a mind-blower cheaper price, forcing the foreign merchants a retreat and press to introducing in this cycle another new thing, since they must trade.

Nonetheless; through the journey, Nwaubani and his crew had finally arrived Awka's supposed biggest smiths market as directed by the natives from the other smaller communities, -all which in one like all others, was the people's village and residence, workplace and factory.

Throughout the journey, past several Awka villages, they kept asking of exceptional smiths and where they could find the high standard skill they seemed, when in every occasion, all hands kept pointing, 'in every of their individual and collective encounter with the natives', -Onyinye, a young woman, who in amazement, is told to have caused an out-cry of awe, in her easy out-performance of six other final competitors, in a quick smith competing party, in a space of few minutes to the fifth.

Women won't end singing her praises, of victory over men, while the men won't stop the highlighting in their narratives, 'she's your fellow woman', whenever they seemed making, in clash with any woman, including their wives, iterating over and over, -pointing at their fellows achievement in play or serious quarrels, to kill blames of responsibility, worst more, when the issue becomes monetary, and between a man and wife, when this comparing questions evolves of way highly doing women, who are not just supporting the family, whether 'poor, average or wealthy', but whose achievement had as well elevated the families pocket and status.

In the story, she was said to have made from piece of old knives, fine needles, with the eyes and points all complete, without being filled or ground. The admiring play of her popular rise to victory remains the awe that filled this easy talent show and the involved time space, while her



male counterparts, were still struggling with their heavy tools.

A particular old woman, so excited to the event instead of directing Nwaubani and his crew straight to this popular woman's abode, started all over again, almost repeating the woman's story she had just told. Also, this endless stories, caused Nwaubani into an innate desire to meeting this woman 'well talked about', that the old woman had for the third time earlier, repeatedly mentioned of her accompanied beauty to her new popularity, that did in few weeks, attract her very many competing suitors, - all rich and young . The ninth of them successfully won her over, and now, had got bethroded to him, and in his house and as well, families large compound house, which houses a large heavy duty smith factory, long operated by the man's old times glory-day aged father, one among the influential's that gave their son's both economic and otherwise reason for her pursuit, -there she now lives.

Nevertheless, their fatigue had been caused off their endless journey of urgency in just few days, up to Elugu.

Air filled in heated gases of over-heated furnace, numerous sounds of iron gnash and smashing and repeated sounds of falling heavy weight trees, sighted near and far, joined in the noise, and these fallen trees in the great heat, all at once to be used for the fuelling of these wide furnace.

Before each smiths house, in each's compound, is a shop where the factory finished works are displayed for merchants to behold.

It was Onyinye's village, the woman whom had been on the lips of all. However, in time, a young boy came calling, thinking Nwaubani and the crew were long travelled merchants, since they had cattles with them which is for no other use for merchants, other than goods carrier once on land.

Nevertheless, while the young boy tightly followed by, struggling to draw their interest, Agbara after a short while, got use for the boy and so, threw him a piece of cowrie, on deal to get another half after he leads them to the place of the much talked about Onyinye.

This, the boy did as agreed and into a street close, he took his other cowrie throw and left the men to their mission.

Upon that street close, was a long fenced wall with a long gate sharply coloured in fine mud-mixed colour with white and black inscriptios made

upon it; there, Onyinye and her bethrothed husband to be, and their servants live.

Now in Onyinye's factory, they came knocking. Afterwards, one of the many apprentices, walked through to them.

'Who do you seek' – a dreaded man like Agbara had come out from the smith's forge -'which like the carvers are in all places separated from the main house', came asking the crew.

'We seek for Onyinye – the woman whose name spells in all lips around the village, Nwaubani in his headman position, replied this other man.

In the thorough discussion, the Onyinye's husband to be, had come to the case show, followed by Onyinye herself. But all that Nwaubani had described, she feared, she could not attain.

It was at this point, that Nwaubani in his inblooded-Aba ways of manoeuvring deals and getting 'one' into his achieve, walked in a calm charismatic manner, onto where the twelve setted ivories had been tied upon, he uncovered the cloth and looking onto her said; 'anyone, even in a joint company of all the best hands Awka can provide and you can as well gather, so long as you deliver, you earn all these ivory'.

Twice, now, few seconds after Nwaubani's seduce, - very visibly to all that noticed, Onyinye's husband had swallowed his spittle once more for the third.

Now; 'the physician had been tempted and all things that he once heard, known and feared of the evil forest, he had been blindfolded of and even to the dept of its most dangered ends, where ghosts, manovelent and restless spirits are believed roamed in and beyond, the physician has determined to go this length, in this part, on the must of this special herb'.

In affirmation, a space was given to the men where they made tents for their short stay, until the awaited time elapse. Soonest, Onyinye was seen engaged in a lengthy discussion with her husband, who afterwards left the house and never returned the same day, until the morning after, when he returned, coming with couple of other men, all said to be best hands in their special used skills and a particular, 'Igwe', said to be the best knock bangers maker, in the entire area - of them that tremble, and sounds the loudest in all ceremonies.

All briefed, in the time later, the gates got shut in permanent, and all hands at once put on desk, including Nwaubani's, who directed in the best arrangement on how the smith's should forge, the separated making of a fat but medium buck kind, made in some special manner, and explosives and blackpowders in particular, forged alongside its fuse to make a kill. This un-usual making of a canon's replica, though not almost in any form nor closely alike look, but merely a bucket and pot kind shape, -work had begun. However, after many spent hours, only ended in a disappointing result, regardless all their combined know-how's, skills, efforts, energy and enthusiasm put together, to at the end, end in the manufacture of a mere ultra-mega ugly pot-like knock banger, in which appreciation to say, 'whose sound only brought neighbours and people around the neighbourhood to a curious visit in safety check, but never blasted off the heavy palm stem, tied upon it, nor light the old dry cloths and leaves..

On this and on a very unfortunate note -to fatigue dropped state of everyone of them, who had put their all in the forging and carving of the pot like shell, everyone sluggishly abandoned Igwe and his failed project, alone to his failure of making an ineffective blast, as they sluggishly lay on the ground, some on benches and others on mats, set just by the front of their tents.

Nevertheless, since failure was a no no, even Igwe made moves of exonerating himself from it, trying to get ride of it that in his mind craze, all he now did was walk to and fro, picking the containers of the black-powders he had added to the mix, mostly foreign and some others local, which in the end he addressed Nwaubani, who's foreman of the contract and one person visibly impatient and ready to do whatsoever, to a positive outcome of that knock in few limited days, 'as he promised', and also, not like the other exhausted men, - he still was open to listening.

To Nwaubani, he had explained a suspected low supply of blackpowder, thus the poor effectiveness of that knocks-blast.

It was on this note that Nwaubani and Igwe took with them the only two available horses in that entire surrounding, to go gather with big sacks, plenty loads of black powders at the most north-western boarders of the Igbo state and country at large, in another growing city -Abakiliki; land of all earths blessings and resource, in where most of the earth prescious can hardly be said, not found within. Not even the powder, sitted side by side it's most fertility.

Nevertheless, in this country, outwardly referred by foreigners as kingdom but unknown to them, kingdom without kings, that in their unbeknownst as their writings recorded, remained the last and only of that ancient family that had required to be set out among them, a king as it was with other surrounding countries, letting this half the one-alone that never required, side by side the Igbo already republicanism'; - through their cross past, in this Igbo's Elugu, past the villages of the Ndiike and Aro-Ndiike'chukwu', from where Abakiliki is farther reached west, that in-houses in a centre point, the centre of our very earth, the 'equator', from where the times begin and ends, at zero longitude and latitude, which after it's pass comes the magnificent view from afar, \_Ugwu Nsude, the giant-mount of Udi's entire Nsude pyramids, where to the awe of Nwaubani, who alone can explain why his sudden curiosity and surprise face, as though there exist something so new in the reach of this ancient step pyramids.

'It was the exact type pyramid replica of Egypt's step pyramids his father never stopped telling him while he turned its pictorial pages in his journal, that on his promise, would take him with him to the wonder and more, on his next voyage to Egypt'.

Now, Nwaubani started in his wonders, wondering on the how about of exact step pyramids, which supposedly that pyramid existence crosses no where else beyond the Nubian-norths of the continent, talk more being deep across the guinea and Niger, and no where else ever but in the deep of this forest country, shattered all over in this particular area, then the mount, -giant of them all saying in it the wonders of God's wisdom, only prove that a people of some old records, taught on their then ships service days, actually slaved in the north of that continent -he thought tirelessly.

On getting there also, Igwe had climbed off his own horse greeting a few natives who were making amends on a smaller pyramids-wall, which like all, with the mount inclusive, were all made of mud, being the primary constructing cement here in the inland, distant from the wood using water close villages.

In their repair of this part, heavily beaten pulp by rain-storm, Igwe walked straight to one of the closest pyramids, laid before it a stone, bowed and made blessed proclamations upon his life and this contract that he's now being looked upon, afterwards, he went back and they continued for Abakiliki.

Now, they had run a second test pouring in the knock-pot so much explosives all together, the powder in particular and its results was applauding. In the end, Igwe had now concluded in success in his own part of the job and the whole thing got packed for their departure the next morning in their truly evident hurrying, since their arrival. Nevertheless, that night, while the other men slept, Nwaubani had woken at midnight to pour into the knock-bucket, the entire remains of the unused black powders, after which he went back unseen and uncaught by any.

The next day following, they had made their payment in full, and everyone got filled with satisfaction and smiling faces. And just a short stroll past the factories gate as they left; looking back, Onyinye's husband is seen up the fence, sampling one of his own ivories upon his front gate in a trophy display, out of his blessed hands of smith and fertility of his wife's more to come advantages.

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Almost in Aba; many people had started evacuating and many families as well, as they met along the street by Enyi road, all departing in search of a closest refuge, -probably Umu Aro, from where they await future development to the consideration of their next approach.

Even Agbara's wife and child and the immediate families of them; 'the knocks crew, have all being ensured to follow the massive movement as well, considering their husbands having dedicated themselves to an already risky operation, from both the knocks making to its blast.

Nevertheless, even now that Opobo is evidently breathing its last, stories were emerging about several testimonies of the razers developing from the hard-plank shields they had, to a more advanced iron shields, against their stones and cruel weapons, even as uncomfortable and burning as it was enholding iron shields in the countries temperature, 'only this time was harmattan', and are making much more in their recent discovery of Opobo's last life span as evidently open to any, seeing large number of young girls, already joining their defendants army in a large never seen numbers.

When Nwaubani and the crew finally arrived, a great sense of relieve had overtaken the fighting class, there at the frontlines, very close to the factory-turned hall where the knock crew, alongside Nwaubani, got in on their arrival, in displaying of this ogbunigwe -'weapon of mass destruction'. The first of its kind, what the English will call bomb.

Now in the elited hope, a final plan had begun, one with which they poured their whole hearts into; that they believe afterwards in its finish, either becomes their end or end of the razers, to a quench.

Days back, the entire defending army were made of all men, but since the days past, large counts of young women is observed among their ranks; thus if a serious assault without reserve, is believed by the razers a final grand-sack and over-take of this other half of Opobo. In this sense, the razers planned with all they've got.

However on the defence side, in their tactics, they plan to hold tight the enemy with all they have at all flanks, letting them but only one chance, to their mapped point-blank, where in their reduced man-power and self evident limited resources, would allow these thirty-two young women its defence, -holding strong their flanks on the other hand, to the ensurance



of their over-all lead of the enemy into the point-blank zone, in the knocks crew stew pot.

Now, their heaviest men had gone closing up with long shields, the shields that they would hold in the push in the coming eventuality and the archers had set on their lines, javelins of light throw, and separate oils for lighting their reserve arrows, with which to cause fire on the enemies canoe while approaching, having large oil sprinkles splashed against them already.

Surely the fight will be as usual, decided by the razers. And as obvious to become more toughened now, on the self evident appreciation of their insufficiency as can be testified and already appreciated from the razers side, who at the rivers other end were already chanting, and singing in songs of victory end, in very high morale, and setting their canoes in a way-unique and unusual formation, and sequence never seen of them, and like a grand operation this time, their commando units centered in assault, and for the first time, the invisible and never seen Ngwongwo ugu, their general war commander and his voodoo chief priest, holding in hand his bronze staff, as always sighted from the other end before any attack, but had never been seen, likewise the general in whose large canoe, 'being the largest in their entire fleet', had never been set for sail, was about to sail in this one. The battle has begun.

Push, hold firm!! 'Commanders from both defendant formations are being heard shouting from the flanks'. The razers leading flank company, two-third of the entire company had pounced on them and in their both triangles flanks, every one struggled to hold against the heavy pounce, throwing javelins and defending the razers assault.

Following, their commandos had now landed, now with the flanks as planned, already occupied with the rest of the company, headed straight for the triangle end-point.

On their reach, it was women they saw fronting this hold, and then came the most unimagined in-pounce and slaughter, that in few minutes with the first of them, left-handed commandos, the line had already weakened, and the enemies now following the end point defendants, steadily as they gradually retreated.

Now, it had become obvious that the centre can no longer hold, and unlike planned on good patience requirement as so to concentrate and as well, compress a large number of the razers to the mouth of that stew pot, then in an ordered retreat, trick them into an exciting pursuit into the Ogunigwe's point blank to a supposed inevitable bombardment, the flag bearer for the Ogunigwe had at once, raised her flag to this call, calling the knock crew into a pre-timed and hurried operation, which Nwaubani lead in the job.

Now, on their getting there, few steps behind the women's dominated V-end point, the flag got raised down, awaiting them set the knock-blast and lighting of its fuse-wire, to be raised afterwards, then their rush to an immediate retreat.

The commandos personally led by Ogu and by the side, his by standing Voodoo man, standing right behind them still unharmed nor armed, but alone with his iron staff', the commandos were becoming much more aggressive and in this impatience, very much now pushing forward, ten times more aggressively.

Now, on the razers getting closer to their point-blank and the knock crew moving closer to light the knock, Aguiyi -the commander of the stew line, still charging the women that kept them stayed tight had been wounded already, stabbed in the thigh and had been carried away, and just between the same time space, a spear came flying, into the belle of the bravest of all that women, which was in same time the knock and retreat flag bearer, and now another in a rush killing the huge man, set to her guard as she oversaw the knocks job timing, the rest of this front liners had gone frightened in this leaderless morale charge and in fear, quickly picked into retreat, pushing Nwaubani the knocker into hurried pressure, that observing their retreat and commotions that would become on their closer reach to that pot he was monitoring its light travel, he had quickly cut the fuse wire, oiled the now more risky and shortened wire, lighting it for a second, and almost to their stampede by these retreaters, quickly joined in its march, where in one time following the centre, all the other flanks had started withdrawing, as their own retreat flags raised along. And in all, coming to this leading centre, only for the retreating force to had stamped off the fired wire, and to the witness of Nwaubani, a chilled cold ran through his spine.

'Carried by men from his crew matching out, off their own point blank area, while he had struggled and still struggling to get back to light

the quenched wire, and on his forceful carriers side getting repeatedly consoled, -'we have failed they said', Nwaubani in his powerless state, still struggled to by all means, set himself free off their grip in this emanating and inevitable tragedy, topped up to his seeing men and women falling to the swords of the much advancing razer's commando and now, almost past the stew line in failure of his promise to the entire raised army.

It was at this point that Agbara who among that knock crew, having watched Nwaubani's depressing grief and overpowered state that so he immediately rushed into the blank, for the knock that possibly, he could hurriedly light the remaining fuse wire, regardless this risk though worth taking, much more now the razers advanced much closer to it.

On this, Agbara had struggled his way through, upon the point and now to hold onto the knocks fuse came one commando, after another who he managed killing in this quick rush, by quickly planting sharpened stone spear through them. But, to his unfortunate encounter, came another, unknown to him, while he was offguard, bent and lighting the remains of that fuse connected unburnt wire. From behind, another, a very slim and slanty man dugged his sword deep into him that he fell instantly.

Weak and decapitated, again, while he had already fallen, the man raised his sword and struck deep once more into his waist side, then thinking he is dead, took his sword off and kept advancing.

Broken and crippled in that waist injury, Agbara laid few steps away from the pot-knock, having dragged his crippled self a bit farther from the knock and its coming blast and now, helplessly and as well amusingly, watching the fuse fire travel down for the big boom.

Suddenly, both Nwaubani and those holding him, all who had witnessed Agbara came running quickly to get him out of there, particularly Nwaubani who had being long freed by this men, followed by Agbara's seen already hurrying into the crowd, even while they beheld Nwaubani. But to their rescues pursuits unfortunate disappointment, came the long plead and awaited noise; multiples of boom blasts.

The Ogunigwe had blasted aloud. Nwaubani himself as close as he was fell off its tremble and now still struggling to stand from the beach's sand, already started to weep so badly and worst when he finally saw Agbara, dead and torn in parts, his waist separated from the rest

A tragic demise. Nwaubani had fallen dumb and traumatised, losing just the one true brother that he's ever had and on his stand and outburst weep, an automatic guilt-felling flashed his memory back to the knocks last tested rang, his failure fears and later input of more powders.

Nonetheless, just following the blast, and the loss of most of the razers commandos to its mass kill, and of most significant, 'Ngwongwo-Ogu', and his right hand voodoo man; the razers in their disarray and scrambling got quickly surrounded by men from all flanks, and many who made their way, running back to their canoes either got shot or helplessly surrendered as well.

On the day of Agbara's funeral, after a seven days mourning there in, a seven and another observed and enforced seven mourning earlier in Aba, the entire Arochukwu was filled to brim by men and women from Opobo, Ogbor hill and Enyi areas, -giving their last salute to a highly lost comrade, in whose sacrifice they live, felicitating with and consoling his family with gifts and excessive food gifts that could go for a year and half without end.

Digging his grave, the entire men that had visited circled in the indulgent, round his clans age-group, 'all youths' digging his grave, and wouldn't let a non-clans man in it's participation, with several bottles of gins all over as they dug and drank in mourn.

On his graves cover, pouring his own share of earth as a father upon Agbara's grave, Ahamefula had so much grieved that he started weeping openly like a woman that he had to be taken into his room, for it's not supposed to be seen of the man gender, tearing like a helpless child or woman.

After the burial; on the other hand, his mother Oluoma had to be taken by her parents, back to her own village, Ihechiowa that now developing a suicidal attitude, she may not end up committing suicide for her loss of her first seed, while Ada was now worn-out, and with her young baby, in a helpless state of mind.

For her, she was already tired and decapitated in her continual rain of tears, upon her bewidowedness and misery.

Nonetheless, in the coming day and man's usual natural mourning, Ahamefula had made himself a new home in a nearby bar, where he

repeatedly drinks himself to stupor, only to be walking home drunk and staggering, that now he didn't even mind the said subject -of his hard earned societal reputation.

However it ended when Nwaubani summoned courage to stop him, but after the obvious that Ahamefula now cannot do without the wines help or will be heard weeping instead of sleeping at night, Nwaubani now took it upon himself to buy him the wine on each night of his return after he had covertly taken his, in the bar in same quest to out think his sad reality, and most times, self blame that come upon his taughts whenever alone that he starts blaming his fault on Agbara's death on his additional input of way more black powders.

His now the particular carrier of the family since the months, and goes for the village market to keep his mind busy, selling farm produce amongst the women dominated market, only to return through the back route into the compound, where he would drop before Ahamefula's door the wine pot he had purchased, using part of the money.

For Ahamefula, he have being stucked in his trauma that he only opens his door to take for himself a delivered wine, and later in the morning, drop the pot off the same spot he had taken it, for refill, which became the only second time he opens his hard mat door.

However, for over six months now, he had started accepting and moving on with his life and reality, including steady visitations to Ihechiowa, where his wife had become very occupied with events that would help her off the glaring and sorrowful reality.

There also, Ada had as well visited sometimes ago, but rarely now, that she's fully the one party, in utmost care of her growing daughter, - notwithstanding, that Ihechiowa was just way close anyways, being next of this holiest villages and just by Arochukwu, past Iyi-ocha -'the white stream', as is a type of another very far south but bigger than a mere stream, and from afar the wonder meet-colouration on that sea part, where it seems the earth and heavens meet; -'Igwe-ocha', past it to get to Ihechiowa, whose name in roughly meaning like the rising of the day or day light, in its name of continual noun, where light means Ihe, God chi and Owa this brighting, -Ihe-chi-owa'; -the brightening God's light.

## CHAPTER NINETEEN

Nwaubani have returned as usual, using the back route from where he drops Ahamefula's pots of freshly tapped palm wine.

Walking straight to his 'room-hurt', drunk and tired, he came recalling Ada's weeks ago encounter with himself and her rising concerns over Agbara's departure and the short-end of his name, regardless that Agwu itself wasn't ended and Ahamefula also had other little boys and girls, who can continue from him, if need comes.

Then for her, looking at her face, she ultraly had choosen this path of deep love to make for her late husband another, who will be a continuation of himself in his name and most untaught of, this very time when the supposed primary inquirer of this peculiar religion, -Oluoma haven't set foot in Aro since Agbara's burial.

In that time, just three weeks ago, in her first encounter with Nwaubani, even in his total awakening on these ancient religious sacrifice, and the ill regards that follows a brother's wife despise, he had still failed in fulfilment on his part's responsibility, though both drunk to fill, -cause still in him, he felt unsupposed and incomplete as so that in blood, that he differs from Agbara.

Now, on this faithful night, just as he opened his doors mat-cover, sitted on his bed was Ada, sitted with a large pot of wine and horn filled with wine that she's long being drinking, to had become so badly drunk.

This time, as it is in the old was the last that afterwards it becomes the case of despise, which usually follows a divorce from the family. Nevertheless, Ada was still very young and stunning in her excessive beauty, that any man will take her in any time any day more-now, she has just a girl child.

Widly-opening this thick door-mat, beautifully uncovers before him, the untainted shine of Ada's beauty, -her dark chocolate shinning along the rooms bright lamp. Her flowery made cloth pleasing to the season, and on her body, smells of fine perfume, lips shinning and hairs bright -that anytime, would keep anyone stucked upon, not even Nwaubani.

Now to his dumb foundedness, Ada had risen and started walking up to him, drunk and staggering; and in the mildest of her voice Nwaubani had



ever heard, she engaged him, pouring her whole heart once more, beholding shame in her drunkenness. But unlike the other, pouring her felt disappointment and vexation upon him.

'I find it difficult to believe -she begins; that you, a man so unloving and ungiving had found his way through, into the good hearts of men like Agbara, and how about his father on whose side of loving you, lost his livelihood he held dear all for your case as told. She said, pausing for a while to preventing tear dropping off her eyes and of all her headaches and now Nwaubani's own shaming on her.

You aren't worthy, she continued again, saying aloud with a big stagger.

Tell me; '.she continued in great highlight, still in her ultral mild confrontation, -'what greater love is there for a man to give up his life for another'.

It have always being you, Ada said in high tone, for your ill fates and mistakes, that this people keep loosing everything, and now Agbara, and what did you do instead, despise him, despise his own wife and now deny your memebership to the family -that you no longer bear Agwu; 'how evil can you become, she laments again louder, to despise his own part, his own wife, to the joy of his extinction, she ended.

Afterwards, Ada had quickly grabbed a cloth part evidence for her course off Nwaubani's bed, and immediately steps to get out, so angered that any attempt of Nwaubani to talk her down, even after her lowering her own self before him for the cause of bearing Agbara a heir, will but only engage her wrath, Nwaubani in his moment of knowledge and critical happening, had become locked in the midst of decisions. To either keep feeling inferior and cause great dishonour, or to take the honourable path off his inferiority. And on this, just as she stepped out, almost to by passing the hurts door, Nwaubani quickly takes measures and just at once, grabbed her in the quick, and up upon the bed.

'Shame, guilt and sorrow ruled the night, but a sacrifice for a course religious'.

Kom kom, kom!! A loud sound of combined ikoro's had begun playing from afar, far from the directions of Ibini Ukpabi, Nwagbara's place of abode.

Gay and gay it played, and after a brief stop, plays of knocks, gun shots and instruments of great melodies started playing from different directions, in a responding manner, like say they were responding to the ikoro's message, that later played for a second, affirming to this smaller sounds, after which everywhere fell back into the nights deep silence.

However, since Nwaubani was also like Agbara, a member of an Eko society, but still couldn't decode what message this plays passed, it's call nor mode of responds, it probably must had become a way highly sophisticated, 'surugede', -dance of the spirit, one which are in the levels of the likes of the dibia's to decode.

Next to their adjacent also was an old Afa dibia -Uwa, who outside, was shooting aloud and singing in hurmour, and followed by this shots, he ended with some fine responsive sounds he made playing harp and blowing his ram horn.

Over two weeks now, stories of Nwagbara's duel with Azuka which was said to had been mediated by an Eze-Nwanyi from Obi-Igbo, 'where they both instead were made to save their energies with a kolanut she brought, after which they made proclamations on Nwagbara's initiated dispute', -had spread over the entire village, and though still unclear why this had become so important and still emanating off peoples mouth unending, and its usual linkage with the days happening. However, since it is one of those duels between the one-uncle and his nephew, still unably settled by their both responsible kinsmen, it initially was a thing of no great interest to the larger people and at such, not taken serious in the main.

This remained so until a first locusts strick in the village, following a second and the third now; everywhere had felt an outroar, 'what have we done; the people asked aloud.

People's labour were gone, crops damaged and destroyed by these pest and since that week through, in the temple, even as Azuka witnessed, the temple had gotten the greatest number of pilgriming aggrieved citizens since the week, and very many sacrifices.

Even in the farms, the people libated as well, and those who had temples at home made offerings and another in their farms also, particularly, those still unaffected by this beasts ill struck. Some with birds and others with guinea fowls, in addition to their things of sacrifice -believing in this instilled fear days, of sharing among the many victims, that 'they'

must have sinned greatly, to be befallen by such carious pestilents.

Nonetheless, it started becoming clearer amongst the people, in relation to the past weeks spreading stories of duel between the priests family, that the entire people had started asking questions amongst them that knows better, that in the boiled popular curiosity and fear, another news is heard this day in relation to the priestlies; Azuka, the hightpriest was no where to be found.

In the incident, many said that it was after a loud sound, 'undictated', was heard and many others after it, as said, a many sounds beat night, that Nwagbara on the following morning, stormed the temple with his crew in a new faced and once more torment of Azuka's peace, but this time, that things took a different mode due to Azuka's honoured guest, that he got provoked and intended using brute force against Nwagbara, which they resisted, then came the priestess emerging with a fine Kolanut, held proudly in her position of not just a woman but a priestess in both genders position, and can do and undo all that pertains the Kola's sacradeness, added more to their forever virgin spiritual cleanliness, she presented this Kola to Azuka and then Nwagbara that after they made confessions of their claims upon it, in the oats of 'may', then she asked for normalcy between them both, broke the Kola and threw its parts in four directions.

However, it was said by witnesses, who had visited the temple on purposes unique to them, that while Nwagbara took his own oat, that he had called upon the earth and its pestilence to prove right his position and bring an everlasting incompetence, and end to the reign of them that had extorted his possession, and it became this words of his that is believed by some, to have caused the wide spread news in the people's expectations of what may become, and now it's reality, but badly, that the general people had become collateral victims.

Now; on Azuka's own side, in his fear of incompetence and fading popularity, he had run out in disguise and in company of Nwosu and two other honourable osu's to the Eze-nwanyi's place, who hails from Obigbo, in plea that she may help undo whatsoever oats of that Kola that she had overseen, following his now confused state, of disproving Nwagbara's claims of incompetency.

'Moreover, just a day before his departure, another attack of the locusts army was reported of once more. Still on, on that day of their both

confrontation in the Temple, Nwagbara had argued a sense and vision of abomination upon the land, that having waited along without hearing a first spirit call from the temple, that he now took the space, beating to fellow spirited people who surely as he said had along waited and on his play, responded. In his argument, he argued that the ever first call should had been coming from Azuka, thus, incompetent, and that Azuka had become but a mere ceremonial high priest. Today, he had en-mass started once more in his gathering of additional high support and sympathy raise, drawing many on causes to share reasons with him.

Now in Obigbo; the heart and spiritual heart of Igbo and all that it entails of freedom, freewill and all innate free character of what Igbo is in blood and soul, including autonomous in governance and capitalist in interest.

It is Igbo's heart itself, of old and of new, and the many related people's, that just as its told when mostly about the new, on origin trace that the question of Enugu comes up, in the ask of the questioner to seek their answers if in relation with Igbo, has a part, in or not in Enugu-Nsukka, -so long as claims a part of the Eri's party immigrants, Obigbo itself is on its own an ultra special centre, that even in its geography, unlike Nsukka, -unifying all this diversified relations of Igbo itself, both of ancient and the later mix and several emigrated coastliners, side by side their Asa, Aro and Ngwa neighbours.

'It remains, of the old and the first of men, unslaved and unchained, remains the heart house and headquarters of the free -Amadi, and houser of its ultra ancient deity, -Amadioha, also called Kamalu-Ozuzu, being the Zeus, Angel Michael, the god of war, from which fierce and might name, came off the name Kanu and Kalu as said in same southern dialect.

In Eze-nwanyi's shrine nevertheless, she had done all that she knew that could help arrest the situation, but to no avail, that again and again, when one of the osu's goes back to check on the development, they kept returning with more news of the plague and in this next week, which got Azuka going crazy, -Nwagbara had begun a big club campaign in the temple, where he was absent and the market places and even now, one time he had called for a gathering in the square and one-third of the village gathered, not just to hear what he's got to say on the ongoing plague or Azuka's where about, which he keeps making subtle mockery of, but also to enjoy the young eloquent orator's speeches, subtle mocks

and campaign.

Now, all that was in the mouth of the entire people became; 'where is the highpriest, isn't he again an intercessor between us and heaven, or have he lost his glory to the said true son -Nwagbara '.

In this craze, Azuka pleas desperately to the priestess for help, that being incapable, she now took him to the home of an aged blind Afa -diviner. A man so old that he barely could walk, even with his walking stick in hand, that he had to be serially helped out by his son. However, it became on this Afa's divine inquiry, that Azuka's little remedy came about.

Sitted, they prepared the man a good tasty goat meat as he requested on the first day of their visit when he asked them to return, after his merchant son; his first and most senior of the others, being now the rightful owner of that obi they sat in, having retired from his merchandise to enjoin and continue in this inherital Afa business of his very aged father. That in respect of the inhereting tradition, as it is of old and new, on all other son's, departing for a new abode as was with Agulu-Eri, and letting the next to the dying father, freedom to continue in his run of the lineage and like this family, their inherital Afa dealings as a priestly family would say priestly service; this old Afa dibia had made sure that his son was besides him, and learn in all services, before his ultimate retirement and demise.

'You, is it you the Azuka, they man came asking after he had finished with the meal, and in affirmation, Azuka replied, when with his name, he started playing with the antonym of another, as well beared, that in both meanings remains an unending philosophical arguement -the name Iruka, meaning the future is of most important, contrasting Azuka's the past, 'thus history's, being of more importance than the future and afterwards came asking Azuka, which he deemed most important considering his now problem.

Now, he called Azuka closer to himself, held his hands and after a lengthy silence, broke in his visions of him.

"My son' he began, a man with pure heart, a great level of sanity at least, you have fallen, he said and stired into Azuka's eyes.

He is a very resolute one, he continued, your nephew, he had totally blackmailed you, and robbed you black in the mind of many, but in your

shortest remain of your reign both as Eze and your life, all that I can still see is his rise after your demise and the all that I ever will advise is on my seeing his joyous and everlasting discrimination of you, even in your grave and on this, you must make sure that at least amongst your Aro people, if you think well of your legacy, you must ensure, and make strong resolves to die a good man with a good name and with good things to be remembered with, else he will discriminate you even way beyond your decay and on his death bed cause he's surely going to do better, before a great to come battle, after which Aro will fall and be sacked for a long time, cause truly, God long departed us. And afterwards, -Ekumeku becomes that war that followed. And now to your extinguishing quest, the all that I can tell that 'this is an old cycle, -history at a repeat, and in your name and destiny, think deep and recall, and on this, go to the family of the ill man of a similar bad time before the end of a formal Eze's reign, find off their sons the one without honour -Ugwu, honour that son towards and off his dishonoured part, upon the covenant of our ancestors, bury in his compound and appease the earth with a sin offering.



## CHAPTER TWENTY

Secluded heavily by temple mass-serving osu's, numbering about twenty in the whole, Azuka is seen on an Afo morning walking past the streets, focused and undistracted.

The news of his return broke the night before. No one could follow that crowd cause no one believed themselves pure enough to be so close to the osu's, talk more of touching skins with them, -'a greater fear, more over that, said to be meted segregation upon the worst of its categories perceived too dirty', everyone on seeing this grandmarch, preferably stayed back, distancing themselves from self inflicted wrath and just watching by the corner as they passed, and only dwelt in the end to end wondering and pondering.

Now in Ahamefula's house, -son of that one man, who upon his fall came the great exodus, rose a still unknown underground revolt, and great plague that in its become, triggered Azuka's reign.

Peace be onto this house-hold, peace be onto this house-hold the osu's said repeatedly while they walked in. Everybody in the household and surrounding neighbours had come out watching from a significant distance, when Azuka asked Ahamefula to please present his remaining sons in the name of God and the land that in the general wellbeing, that they be let inspected, upon their honour and cleanliness. This Ahamefula did, and before long, Nwosu had led out Ahamefula's last and youngest son, 'of them taught only pure enough to be either in the close touch of this category osu's, or any most sacredly ritual persons like those in the office of peoples like Nri, in far away Omambala. However, remaining Nwaubani who is adult and thus unclean, a young palm frond is given to behold on his mouth, and then he got led by Nwosu, into the hurt where he's got checked, where in no time, one of them came out calling; 'its him, the uncircumcised'.

Nonetheless, to the whole people gathered, this didn't spring any of a kind of outroar, following all their heavyweight expectations of them and neighbours at large on Azuka's cause of such guarded secluding guardiance, as the cry, never even made sense, cause what is it to be uncircumcised, and how possible can one of that age be said uncircumcised. Afterwards, the men asked Nwaubani to dress proper and with the palm-frond still gripped between his lips, they took him with them, in their centre, and headed for the temple.

This time, Ahamefula who all the while since Agbara's death had been home or indoors and haven't even visited the market squares during meetings nor the bars even, since his duel with Nwaubani, had rushed for his hat and walking stick and quickly sets for Abaka's house, to lay this complain that the osu's with Azuka had taken his son.

However, before they already got close to the temple, they saw Ogbokiri walking out with a midwife off the road, and again an osu who drew with him a young white ram with which he set for Ahamefula's house to make appeals, from where he would be headed for the thick bush, – this; Ogbokiri had told them when they stopped her by, asking about Nwaubani's statue.

'your son have been blade-honoured into full man's skin; his foreskin cut off and handed to that Osu, she said pointing at the ram carrier, who on his lips tightly beholds a young palm frond, who is now heading to your compound to make sin offering'.

In the end, they succeeded in the taking of Nwaubani with them, insisting the midwife should come attained on him in the house instead, least the young man dies of depression and isolation from his own.

Disgust have filled Nwaubani's heart down to his bone marrows. The callousness of this, which he had been subjected to, -thinking so barbaric of a culture that he now despised all that were involved in this ill meted at him, including the midwife who comes almost every day to check on his development, telling anger dissolving stories that never help but only made him hate on her the more.

In the time even, merely few weeks past from struggling with his guilt feelings, he had come again, dealing with great despise and rejection of everything that has to do with the people, even adding it all up, with the callous slaughter of his father, that when Azuka visited even, he had so very much noticed Nwaubani's fury upon everyone altogether, talk more of himself, that he never again visited that home, that he may not one day risk his return with equally or worst inflicted injury, as the young man had threatened.

Eyes locked upon his roof in his room for most of everyday's hours, and now, the turn around of consoling another, came round to Ahamefula, who already was lightly, still on his quieting depression, had now become the one person that comes knocking and staying with Nwaubani in every of this hour's, both with wine, Ahamefula had gotten

for free from Nwachukwu's bar, sharing with Nwaubani, while they drink to drunk; this continued so, until one cool evening, when he felt so much pity to young and ignorant Nwaubani, that finding a way to help him off this damaging state, having taught greatly how best he would help revive him at least with certain words of encouragement, only to end up telling his own life's story, beginning from the old short good years and the rest of the worst, even before he met him', starting from the very genesis, when things fell apart. In return, Nwaubani tells a story of his own experience while with Obasi, when he had gone swimming with the new friends he had made, after they had all gone wrestling, to wash off their dirt bodies. In his recall, he explained how terrified and in same time how scary he taught of himself, the very moment one of the boys jumped off the stream and started raising alarm, over shock on their taught deform or monster of his genital, that he couldn't understand why. However, he confessed he had gone to see Obasi, whom alone he had since perceived as comfortable to speak with, as he was the only one who wholly understood him better, including his tongue and trade language way before his new aquisition, but on his return for Obasi, only to learn that he had departed for Aboh and from then afterwards, he never went for group bathing, ever.

In the end, the both grabbed a deep hug, weeping in their loss and blaming 'self's' for all that had happened.

Two weeks later, with Nwaubani now beginning to come out time after time to his front door, enjoying the nights fine breeze, one day, being the second of that weeks days, on sighting Azuka, he had risen in confrontation against him as Abaka who he walked in with kept calming him, that their both noises had caused Ahamefula out, curious of the conflicting voices on the outskirts of his compound. -It was Abaka along side Azuka who had come visiting, and having calmed Nwaubani, both offered them seats, in the deep of that very night.

It was midnight now, and thus Azuka and Abaka had made a midnight visitation. Abaka had just returned from an honoured cult's meeting, based on invitation as an honoured and state significant guest, where all who had opposed Nwagbara's mother years ago and now Nwagbara, being them also that years ago following Okoroafor's evil days came to reject in total, Ahamefula's acceptance and integration back into the community, until his kinsmen came to his rescue. They are suspected, mostly the men and many among them, bigback sponsors, and overseers of that bloody revolution and though among them surely

are the front-men of that bloody bath, which was so obvious but secretive that no one can be singled out among them to being front or back man, but their resolve can never be in time forgotten following Orji's far pursuit, patience in play and his final hunt down, and Nwagbara, who never became Eze, where as personally suspected by many, manipulated, seduced, corrupted, charged or even threatened Azuka to the unflinching of that office.

Nonetheless, today in the meeting as witnessed by Abaka in person, these people who're unseen, but strongly wielded power and resolve had suddenly for reasons best appreciated by them, on agreement, made a round-turn and switch in support and promised rally round Nwagbara, side lining Azuka, who they believe incompetent in dispensing authority, and based on his first shared reasons and cooperation with Okoroafor's kinsmen on letting Ahamefula back and integrated among them -off this lineage they had rashly concluded worth of only bad fortunes to their jealous holiness, and including their bloody approachs when brutal and now with addition to crazed Nwagbara, who already have behind him endless growing popularity, and his uncountable will of doing anything to bringing Azuka's fall, including his pain of his mothers death, which he believes of Azuka, and blames he's cause of it in public, Abaka truly have on safe taughts done wise best, to visiting Ahamefula on this same night of that cult meeting, that he do not feel guilty or blame himself, if time rushes against him.

However, their plans were never detailed on this, being a ceremonial meeting, but obviously and as determined as they spoke when they involved politics among all the other discussed subjects, it may be to even be, -to invite Ahamefula as an honoured guest, to a meeting in the square where everywhere is filled and gathered, including Azuka, then having cheerfully welcomed him like a clubs officio welcome, back into Aro, appreciating some good generally known of him that one cannot look at and attribute Agwu an ill name ever, except single outing 'Okoroafor', -to then shaming his blood line against Azuka, in as well, shaming and dirting Azuka's statue, remembering the old bad days, en-blame of them both, asking questions about the new boy and in full shame of Azuka's second time incompetence, after the first when they warned he shouldn't let this Okoroafor in once more, to now asking for his decamp. -All this and many others, to bring Azuka to shame, and his reputation, getting him in a tight corner of decision making, public regard and respect, creating also a loss of confidence by the masses towards

him, all to Nwagbara's gain.

Continued in his testimonies, Abaka confirmed that surely, they had started this bad planned out stories and in the end, came instructing Ahamefula on what he must do, must happen and must not happen, and where he must now be, until a month or two, or three even, to now return when the tensions had gone, and as usual, with Nwagbara shelled back into his enclave, looking for another kill to strick.

While they spoke, Azuka ended, having asked that Nwaubani please excuse them, issuing his own knowledge on the situation, while Nwaubani listened, hiding behind the hurts back wall.

'Your son is also an instrument in this war, he said to the shock and sudden fear of Ahamefula, who the question of kidnap got automatically snapped into his taught, in relation to all the 'said' about his father, whose ultimate sin was.

They all know that there is something un-natural about his nature, Azuka continues, and are no fools, he said and for a while pursed and resumes afterwards, not to count of the endless nicknames onyeocha -whiteman, oyibo and the so that people at their amusement on first sight nicknames this your son, having not just for his fairness, but also facial similarities like the reds themselves, much more than those of us that looks so fair as the reds already.

I do not know, but since your adopted and you alone can tell better, cause in any way untaken, this people have really come out for our heads.

These things will cut both ways and that it may not come against us, then you must not stay above this week. Remember this instructions, and send to Abaka as he had said, a messenger to him of your readiness between the week, then he would await you on the outskirts of our southern boarder, to lead you to the synagogue in Aro-Ikwere, where a young man reigns priest, that place you will see Nwosu, who will thoroughly keep you in the priests care.

Nonetheless, never be afraid because you are no Okoroafor nor Orji to be pursued after by men. However we have only chosen perfectly the young priest for a reason – they instructed Ahamefula, and just as instructed, by the end of the week, he had already kept his house ready and on the very evening departed with Nwaubani for Ikwere to the synagogue in its

pasture where Aro dwells.

In the end, as it came to pass after a four weeks long stay and more, came the subsequent disappearance or probably kidnap of Nwaubani, son of old Agwu, that Ahamefula couldn't think more but feared of this said underground revoulters, but endless Azuka's sent messengers would still not agree as they reported, that their intelligence had yet to confirm traces inbetween.

It was saddening and grieve-full, and today even in support of men set from Arochukwu itself, by Azuka, and another half sent by the villages young priest in search of Nwaubani, Nwaubani was still nowhere to be found.



## PART THREE

\*\*\*

## CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

The slave market have many years ago, since the century, been gaining executive momentums, starting from port Fernando Po, when a British preventive Squadron captured a slave ship in a particular popular port. However, in this yet to be known country, its effect came directly to the states bight at the most early beginnings of the century, in a direct confrontation between this same British whom since had become domineers of the areas, against some chiefs of Bonny while protecting a Spanish slaver, who had come for the 'outlawed' trade – in the black market.

This regardless, the outlawed trade had become solely unconsidered as people, most particular, the dealers and procurers still made excessive provisions of sells as observed by 'Pacheco Pereirops' himself – 'this big canoes, largest of all, carrying in it about eighty men from the inlands, \_"the largest in all Guinea"\_ and coming with yams, cows and sheeps, also came even in the time so much more number of slaves most particular from the Aboh routes, through Orimiri, where in this end will end waiting for buyers who at large may never succeed.

In that most-early years particularly, it witnessed the beginning of a switch in clocks hand, crippling all chaf economic empires, that only the wheat stood and all others, in whose economy rested on the 'trade', collapsed fundamentally. Thus, all coastal areas letting those at the inland the true notice of the states economic true nature, -all dependant off the inlands.

Now, the Brits have become very desperate to trade directly with peoples of the inland, but knowing the risk, the people at the coast have proven hard to penetrate.

The kidnap of Nwaubani on a cool evening while walking home through a lonely path – in Aro-Ikwere, had been carried by a long time aggrieved young man, who in time past, had suffered loss from the hands of Nwaubani which he identified very clearly and some few others who he did not take clear note of, as they were too far to be taken note of.

Nevertheless, his encounter with Nwaubani remains a shock to his unbelieve. -The first time he saw him by, during a communal clean up. However, after a thorough spy and follow up to acknowledge his route and living place, it came to pass in his planned vengeance, the moment he jumped off the bush and immediately caused his unconsciousness by

pressing upon his nose a poisonous leave that caused Nwaubani's faint; after which he took him farther, deep into the bush, tied him up and now thinks of what worth, a supposed punishment he should inflict on him in repay.

This boy, is 'Ezike'.

Hails from Ubulu-Ukwu, and his widowed mother from Nsukka-in-Agbo, and in whose loss all his bedeviling gets traced from -whose unfortunate kidnap happened three years ago by some mischievous slave raiders. However, coming on to a later reunion after months of his continual search, after a later time of flea from fear, he found his mother in Brass, unsold, but serving another, whom he now struggles to raise specific money amount, to buy her freedom.

Thus, it became on this note, that Ezike joined the smuggler business whose team later came to be reduced a year back in a furious attack by Nwaubani and a couple of other men, while already they were finishing their deal with two redmen he had personally smuggled in for that black market deal, through the delta.

That day, he had jumped off his canoe, down into the river, on sighting Nwaubani, who mercifully didn't strick the men -his customers he had smuggled through, thus the reason why he hadn't killed him yet.

His origin to Ikwere is dated three years back and like them all who had become since the Benin rise – refugees, amongst those who had crossed Orimiri, like those that crossed to the north for Onicha, gets constantly identified as; have assimilated even in the history of the other farther people that fled with Eze-Chima, asides the other half of Umu-Chima.

In his own turn, it all began from the degenerating relationship between Obi Olise and the ruling Oba who he was friend with.

Adezua; the Oba's sister, most times rumoured as his lover due to his innate relationship with her had been married in union making to the Oba's friend – Obi Olise, whose friendship of benefit relied on his delivery of medicines and divinations to the Oba.

Nevertheless, this improved relationship came to an end, just few years later of the marriage, and weeks of her untimely death. Gossips held the Obi to had been impotent and for some other reasons used her for divination – now, it became on this reference that the Oba of Benin sued

for war, and so the Idu forces marched but on their arrival, Ubulu-Ukwu had been deserted; the frustrated Benin army dispersed, and in same way like many, Ezike finds himself refuge in Aro-Ikwere.

Nonetheless, now that Nwaubani's search have been intensified by the powers that pushed behind his search, and even in this recent finding of his in two-weeks captivity that he had kept the young man, he now evaluates quickly, from all the troubling parts of the estuary of the great sea, where he would take him from.

'This man is totally different, his hairs coming fur and his race in its mix now shinning closely with that of the redmen on fine linens and trousers. Perhaps, taking him to one of them will not incur punishment of their anti-slave laws, but still, earning from his misery will give what surely will rescue his mother – Ezike had taught to himself.

Now, beginning from the not-most intensive problems, he evaluates.

Many many centuries ago, far to the territories of the swampy delta's of the many people's yet to become Kalabari, and right from its most Igbo connection in this discuss, a feudal establishment emerges, called the Amanayabo.

In the time, with increasing numbers, had become unstable with the available resources of an economy that only depends on fish and salt production, and awaiting patience to get the last turn of the merchant canoes, coming through the 'Niger' – Orimiri, where fish and salt production were also available.

Then, trade faced northwards, and in the later future, this became the cause of their developed unallowing – grip to the new trade face and all that it came with, even with assimilating the redman's wear – the Panama hat, into it's cultural wear, 'being also a thing with every coastal people having mingled so innate with the foreigners', that even before the wake of their incling, of that area had become the ever first ever, to deal in the ill trade with this people – the first of them, Portugese.

It became from this farther, that they attained their greatest wealth, serving the new middle-man position, now that most trade and much more migration faced south.

Still in time past, before now, while the people increased in size, a

reign of emigration out of the heart lands began, and so while all lands further north were already inhabited and to the south are stopped by the great sea, they now took a longer walk, following the great sea, by its side, and major amongst this became that of the people who left farther for the east and past long swamps just like theirs, and other smaller areas still settled by other people. They kept on in their journey, until they got to an area halfly inhabited by another called the Ejagham, where they named Kalabar. But in no time, only to come upon the force of another, migrating in that time of same early century, whose hostility and on their own side, their unfamiliarity with life at the main land caused them from the far villages farther west, to an automatic retreat – this people coming from Ibom in Arochukwu were the Efiks, and in their own turn, they called in old Jukun pattern of age old cultural affiliation, just as their Ibibio counterparts call Aqua Akpa – meaning the great sea, they named the entirety of the territorial sea and land – ‘Atakpa’, and Kalabar became Atakpa.

Now, in the face of this, the retreating people's of Kalabar, spread as they set back for their original home, and their bulk majority settled just by the out bursts of the main village, with a few still going down in the swamps-further, the overall population merged above, and in the reference of old kalabar, called its new village Elem-Kalabari, meaning – New Kalabar, -'this people only in the future to fall into a dawn of lying most likely, almost to the deep of a distorted history and identity', where the Abua's or most particular the first blood Brass whose own words like the first aboriginal Igbos way before the slave trades who they must had come time-along with say Okoloma for Bonny, an Ndoki's town name - that this equal crisis almost to befalling Bonny as well, likewise Okirika who just like the Eleme's are but a meetpoint between the Igbo's of Aro and another that in Okirika's own case, their own language in it's unique became a mixture of what they were and Elem-Kalabar. Isn't it popular that no slave can be King in Bonny and many years Kings had reigned. But almost to Bonny's own share to the loss of their mass identity and the Brass that they share blood oat to the west, it came to be lied that the mass of this Bonny's had been but former Igbo slaves as well as the cause of this language spoken therein.

Now, on the existential unrests.

Kalabar had just come out of a first drift with the Jaja of Opobo, but its own troubles had long been in existence, since in the days of Ambo Mbarak families and another, the Eyo Nsa families in a tussle for leadership of the city-state, and even in the midst of their fights in between, got endless attacks by their northern counterparts, the Ibibios and the Ekoi whom their distinction from the former, over their dealings on them, 'refusing them to sojourn among them after their exit from Igbo when they had no home, on condition, that they would have to adopt their deity and god, -had caused their sworn insistence to keeping them off the 'approaching' atlantic trade which in the end only invited endless pirates from the areas, and very desperate confrontations.

However, in the tussle for leadership, Eyo Nsa came out victorious, allying with the redmen and in the end, became king Eyo Honesty as called by them – in this wake of their introduced religion and foreign names now found amongst the people'. In his victory, later on came their Scottish church, 'Presbytery to the territory as is of the country' , – 'the Presbytery of Biafra'

Nonetheless, in the Eyo's and Ambo's elongated rivalry and fights, a part of the people had wisely left the warring areas further west of the estuaries to settle to even now become one who meets the redmen ships first at its encroachment to that area.

In the future, this group became the first defilers of Jaja's aggression, allowing the redmen build a factory on their territory and in the future, will be joining in a war against him. The Igbo's will call them Qua Ibo.

The Jaja of Opobo.

Born in the century, six years after the gradual domination of that country, by the greater presence of the red-people's of Europe British stock, whom had come with them, confidential treaties amongst many chiefs of the estuary villages, requiring a signed agreement, putting them under their protection in their own claim that they had come protecting their both parties and interests, as agreed by all red-people's, against the hostile others whom they claimed untrusted invaders, in all whose fire power, only theirs can challenge and withstand. 'That in this same century came their ban and pressure on the people to switch trade lines from the slaves to oil palms, being also the beginning of first ever witnesses to the superiority of their British naval power, -seizing slaving



ships still in the act, and gunboat raids on local states, the appointment of John Beecroft as the first counsellor in both that countries bight - Biafra, and that of its neighbour to the west Benin, then also, its interference in local politics, by placing King William of Dappa people firmly on his throne over the opposition of senior slaving chief's, that in all this, only the local estuaries still could succeed in this trade -being the black markets, as the British navy couldn't patrol this remote estuaries.

It was in this same century that came the Officio end to the slave trade, Mbanaso 'Okwara Ozurumba' –son of Ozurumba as said his surname, an Igbo from the hinterland, a village across the Imo river in Ama-Igbo, who would later become Jubo Jubo-Fem and in the redmans corruption Jaja, was born.

Jaja, who was born into a very wealthy Igbo family had been kidnapped at the age of twelve and transported through the Imo river to the great Island – Bonny.

Bought by his first master, who will later give him in gift to his Chief friend; it was this first man, that named him Jubo.

As a youth, Jaja worked as a paddler on his owners great trade canoes, from where he developed richly in experience of the trade through many years of travelling, to and fro the inland markets and amongst the Europeans, having a better understanding of their dealings and the way they operate in this many years of direct contact with both parties.

Never was he involved in politics, and never did he turn away from his Igbo-spirited desire of – 'in his immense' energy, the capitalistic accumulation of so much wealth, in-where insisted like many other people's who in their collective seek and strive to an opposite of it, like the ill survival dependent on conquest and rule upon rule, rather they instead of conquering empires, developed for themselves an economic empire of greatest memory, as the Aros transformed in its confederate, different from other numerous political empires, -having politics never the Igbo beings primary interest, until necessary.

In this time already, the trade was in oil-palm, all in the century, it had taken the place of slave delta markets, and for the palm; if anything ever, the rest of the country was palm.

Nevertheless, the housing system of chiefs and ordinary wealthy brokers

still remained in the culture, either said to have been borrowed off the farther Warri, being that time of the people's switch in manner as to the adaption of their new environment. And it's name, either where Bonny already off it's traditionally having two Kings as documented by Captain Hugh -King Pepple and Holiday, both Igbo, is said of the now one word Ama-onye-n'abo while the other, likewise Pepple, meaning nothing in any coastal indigenous language that got unscrupulous persons impetus of historic distortions, even when Pepple means nothing in their own tongue claiming him their son, until the shames unveil where they now came claiming him and all Igbos in Bonny their slaves and formal slaves. Still upon this coastal livelihood -a feudal style, like that of the major Amayanabo's of the heartlands and Elem-Kalabari, made up of wealthy chiefs families who if gone, gets open for voting of a new chief. This chiefs were the wealthy and the head of his house, being its head or even founder merchant from the beginning' his family and numerous slaves, owned under him.

In the time the superior ruling chief of the Island was King William Dappa, whose imposition on the throne had caused the other two royal houses of Manilla and Anna up in arms and even got Consul Beecroft to send the king away in exile and before his return, in Jaja's own house, Jaja had risen so very wealthy, highly influential and popular amongst the people of his house.

Now, after the not long rule of the Manilla house by Dapuye Fubara -an Igbo, a tussle for the Islands leadership began between two royal houses; the house of Manilla Pepple's house, 'of which the name Pepple, remain surname to all linear members of Pepple's decendants as well as their incorporated members and servants', and the Jaja's Anna Pepple's house respectively with two remarkable Igbo characters, one head chief of his house and both formal slaves, dominating the overall polity, the entire building and in the whole leadership and tussle, in the persons of Oko-Jumbo of the house of Manilla, and yet to come -Jaja, but in the time his master, Madu of Anna Pepple's house – how two formal Igbo slaves had come to have taken over the indigenalization of the both the Amanayabo's headship and politics, its popular houses and even its ruling houses, and if enbroading history, not considering already aged Igbo rule before the English's interference, that one would begin to ask if even, they actually were first to inhabit the Island west, between them and their westside shared Brass people or just mere cause of their numbers that to the closest considering the sixteenth century still reigned

an Igbo -King Owerri Daba; who according to the Kalabari's own tradition, founded the both houses of Duke Monmouth and Duke Afirica, that they say introduced the slave trade. All this not to mention about Pepple, having the first ever Pepple, a full grown and blooded Igbo himself.

It was also, that the Brass population on the Island, happened to be too little, as proven later, by their heavily stocked populace in accompliance with others in Elem Kalabari.

However, in the run still, Madu after a short time had kicked the bucket, allowing his young son Alali, who as well joined his fathers path. And though departing so young and unfortunate, in his mis-management, he had left behind an incurring debt of over a ten to a fifteen thousand euros, owned to British supercargoes.

Fearing bankruptcy, all of the eligible chiefs of the house declined nomination to lead the house, that in the house as said, it became therefore a thing of great relief, when the rising Jubo Jubo – the popular, took responsibility, and filled the void’.

This, begins the coming into limelight of the now grown Mbanaso and from there henceforth, Mbanaso proceeded to put his house in order by organising its finances.

Conscious that the oil market from the hinterland and the wealth of the European trading community on the coast constituted the pivot of the economy, he integrated himself in the both side of trade. Both at once that in matter of a year and another, this depts has been liquidated, letting his house a come back to the path of prosperity.

In later times, following the Anna’s house prosperity, less prosperous houses were beginning to get themselves incorporated into Anna house, and gradually, Jaja absorbed one house after another.

Soonest, his remarkable success became common knowledge in Bonny and beyond, and his becoming very influential breeded jealousy to their rival royal house, in addition to the fear that his incorporation of two third of all the other smaller houses may keep Anna house in majority and in power and for a very long time, if they make their way.

The incorporation of these houses, ment the total political and economic domination of this Ubani’s Island.

Now, here comes Oko Jumbo, who would never allow young Jaja, the

materialization of this speculated reality.

In 1864, Christianity had been introduced in Ubani by its mission men, further polarizing the society. About this, the Manilla house welcomed in open hand, but the Anna people opposed, following the Jaja's personal experience of ill with the church's first missionary sent to Bonny by a man -Crowther, however, which result will come in their way later on in the future, that the missionaries overwhelmingly supported Oko Jumbo to victory over Jaja, when a duel broke between the two houses.

Nevertheless, the new religious incoming to the area asides the people's already slight absorbtion into taking the redmens names, side by side their both profound friendship and many years together living as well as the red's themselves spoke in the people's Igbo language amongst many, also saw forth the genesis of such foreign names from their converts like Chief Williams one amongst their first converts.

Now, on the aforementioned, it came to pass in later years, when a fire disaster broke on the Island, destroying so many valuables and warehouses – in the end, either a suspicious fire outbreak or not, the Anna people's house had become most affected and in no time Oko Jumbo started pressing for conflict as so to catch on his opponent in his disastrous unpreparedness.

In the next month, heavy fighting had erupted between the two royal houses after Jaja had failed in all of his trials to avert such suicidal which came to be in the former prove, the Jaja's getting over-powered, and his sue for peace – however his Plan-B to buy time for the ultimate eventuality, -upon acknowledging a virgin Island to the east, his exist from Bonny; this yet to be known 'bight of Biafra', to found the new Island -Opobo.

Nevertheless, Jaja dragging with him almost half of Bonny to Opobo had brought Bonny's economy crippling and in no far time, all European super cargoes, operating in the area, which since time immemorial had been known for its rough tides and difficulties and days to get to its shore had as well met their economic doom, all falling in depts..

However, for Opobo which was at the other side and perfectly situated to the out-run of the Imo river, it came upon natural domination of the area, through Aro, Aba, upland Okoloma and other Ndoki markets within Owerri and on the river-side. Nonetheless, the Ngwa's production in oil-

palm was top notch, this amongst others, Opobo became the new face of the atlantic trade, close to the bight-major and only competed by the Kalabar's at the other end, dominating the Niger trade, and for the old Kalabar's at the time, the trade wasn't close, except the Jo's who plundered ways through regardless, if illy or not.

Oirimiri was all for the Kalabari's – no one could compete and now in Bonny's fall it tried to, but never still made way and even in the least dominance of them Kalabari's now, however, as always was, only remained upon Aboh's inland middle dependence to the Kalabari's own success, in whose indomitable excessive provision of this oil palms being scarce in the creeks, led to the wholly public respect of King Boy of Brass towards Obi Ossai, that derived the English's report of 'King Obie too much palm oil, King Boy too little'. Normally situated, they took in lead all the goodies far from Igala, to Onicha, even supplies from the areas of Abakiliki and past Agbor, and now Elem Kalabari enjoyed what the Aboh's did enjoy many centuries back, 'having naval watch with over hundred large and well armed canoes, whose predominate position in the route till now, excluding the Kalabari's advantaged taken position, rested on this their grown naval strength, that it still held the entire Oirimiri valley at will, by her war long canoes, armed with brass and iron canon's they had learned in the many years relation with war ships, that just like Jaja in coming years of acqiration, held hold of Oirimiri's entire water bodies, except that the Kalabar's, just as was Bonny, fought pirates instead.

Even at then, still for Aboh, it remains fact as well from many sources, Aboh could still fill sixty large canoes with slaves, dumping in no place but to the delta's domineers; Elem-Kalabar and how about of sprinkles of the days existing Igbo's and communities in Kalabar.

At a time, under its rule by Obi Ojugbali, they engaged Nupe in battle over trade struggles and even against their own, the Anam Igbo, who did almost to bar them from reaching their Igala markets.

Their limelight in history came following the first success of inland penetration of redmen through Elem Kalabar and on the other hand, the people's first encounter with the redmen in their own territory. – This group called the lander brothers, had been arrested on their voyage in the inland, near Asaba and taken captive in Aboh, until they got ransomed by king Boy of Brass. -This in coming future to become the redmens discovery of Oirimiri to the name river Niger, and subsequent

eager attempts to penetrate the inland from this Kalabar's non Jaja's territorial route. Thus, on the other hand also, 'Onicha's to come earlier encounter with the English, becoming Catholics and earlier development.

Jaja's own limelight on the redmen's knowing, came in later year when the Queen Victoria of England asked for his aid to foot-bill her war in far western Ashanti which Jaja did. And afterwards, the overall became, following her honourable visit to him where she offered a sword to him in authority, afterwards the title – 'king'.

This pleasing in the ear, from then henceforth Jaja had been known – king jaja of Opobo; regardless, this short lived relationship

The short lived relationship saw Jaja who had long rejected the missions church to coming to a rethink, even in his dislike of their already establishment of their headquarter now in Bonny and the use of Bonny's own dialect in making the first Igbo translation of their religions book. Along, he also allowed in their incorporation, the establishment of a regular school system.

In the fantasy of this honey moon also, long after he had made a reunion – inviting his old family to the land where he now ruled king, two of his sons in the schooling concern had also gone to England for study, in a secular education as Jaja insisted and even before, he had as well, established a mega school system in Opobo, employing Emma White, an African American to head his schools.

In reports of the Europeans, it is written that in these schools, the pupils had come to be observed to be favourable in standard compared to that of English children of same age.

Now, with Jaja's extensive and non-stop taxation on the European merchants, just like he learned off their own system, and his refusal even in this honey moon to make redress and also allow them a free-trade into the long desired inland, began the see in fall of their far reached relationship; beginning from his attack on the section of Calabar in Kwa-Ibo, where George watt, a rich merchant, built a factory for palms gotten from the hinterland.

George Watt had only gone head-on, out of the Imo river connecting Opobo to do business with this Qua Ibo's, only for Jaja to come for a raid, and both his time and establishment he lost in the process.

Also, the period had witnessed the Europeans later rejection of



purchasing at his unfalling price, even at a general fall in oil price worldwide and in respond, Jaja began his own voyage and shipment to Liverpool, independent of their support and his ship all maned by natives, who hadn't sailed alone to and back from Liverpool in the past.

However still, this activities had led to the now dwelled upon arguments by the red people, that since then, that there was now, no need for any more import duties, arguing that in the existence, that he had broken such agreements as supposed the nature of trade.

Nevertheless, in the end, the victory of the English over Jaja is being over planned, for its inevitability that after a third reign generation, a more European akin King becomes imposed upon the whole area as was King William.

Nonetheless, similar unrests as existed between Ubani's Mbanaso, existed amongst groups in the new Kalabar whose other population swayed way heavy to be overwhelmed by the other in same manner when push came to shove, regardless the endless drop of Igbo slaves, and their own cultural intake of household slaves that in times later, elements of Igbo culture came to have gotten absolved into its culture and society, that even in the century, many Kalabari families amongst whom the Jo's share a part 'against the sayings of their living just entirely off the canoes as well as piracy', had Igbo blood in their veins, particularly the Degema area of new Kalabar, and many of them spoke Igbo as a second language.

However still, though minority having few Igbo aboriginals like the Biseni anyways, as well as others and the old and later Brass, Ijo's heavy concentration of the area's farther west 'resisted' but unfortunately, forth coming began the heavy historical insecurities that came to become as the newly overwhelming Igbo presence, created an 'Igbo Peril' - the danger of indigenous Ijo culure being swamped by the culture of the servile Igbo elements.

Elem Kalabar's political disturbances began in same scale of Bonnys own crises when Will Braide led an opposition to the Amakiri ruling dynasty.

As in Bonny, the power tussle issued into a civil war and the moving of the Barboy to found a new settlement at Bakana.

The tussle created by the civil war, were such that the rest of Elem-

Kalabar also moved out of the city and settled and established two new cities -Buguma and Abonnema.

Nonetheless, among this new two and the major, 'Degema', where the Igbos remained largely, it however still remained a thing of ease, the distinguishion of the many people's and the Jo's, as the Ijo's already culturally, made pierces, marks and tattoos off their bodies. And in its delight, will wilfully do to any who desires; 'where Equiano, being Igbo never approved and aversed. Seemingly, this being first the root of the existent aversion and young Equiano's personal culture shock and own aversion.

In all of this still existing hostilities, so, Ezike seeks for Kalabar, an area already cooling off and out of the agent lock of Jaja's middleman Opobo and also, the good book of the church.

Here, Ezike decides to take his captive. And though a firsthand smuggler, was still in the fear of this outlawed ill trade and fears of what may befall him, if trade goes wrong.

## CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Now in Kalabar, a one half remain of the remnant Igbo's of old town -Ibom, the Efik; the land hosting the Presbytery of the country - Biafra, around the area where amongst it's people and then farther into Ibibio and upwards, who and where goats are kept as pets and dogs reared for it's meat, Ezike have arrived.

Nonetheless, the entire people to this church's corner, their having come late in the ill trades end-time and greatly uninvolvement, got them slightly alleviated from the much extensive coming iniquities of that sin, that comes with destruction, meted suffering and much more enforced exile as they had inflicted their fellows, that it would become for them who remain, the experiences, where princes walk on foot and servants on horse back.

On Ezike's arrival, soonest afterwards, had hidden his canoe as a first class smuggler he was, in such a way that it would be taught, 'heap of grasses', and in the matter if one ever get to its discovery, had tied around it, leaves of young palm frond, which on such placement, beginning in the already state, a taboo in the entire Igbo and here, but though theft and lawlessness must be, but on that who crosses off what's being bounded off with this young palm fronds now barricade tapes, was a greater taboo and believed encall's supernatural consequences.

Nwaubani was in that canoe, tied down. Again, through this few days of sail, obviously Ezike's confusion kept growing wide concerning this young red-man, how he did manage in this mix and how on earth a native had found a woman that bore such fruit.

Nevertheless, in the young man's fear, he had stayed until late evening, when he now set to go meet the only couple of redmen on that shore with a lamp in the dark night.

This two groups gathered in circle just a few stroll from their both ships, and with bunch of burning logs warming in their centre, they discussed aloud, drunk altogether and most times either laughed or came shouting more aloud in conflicting arguments.

This discussion of theirs, Ezike came to the hearing on his closer but slow taken advancement.

'I tell you; Robertson was the first ever, mentioned to had set out in search of the equator and Eden he believed there in, and still their by a great queen was told that to the find past Omambala, still settles the 'lost' that he seeked'. One man, dressed just like a missionary standing firm and defending his last claim that Ezike had heard half way.

Nonetheless, a couple of different issues had brought the two groups to this country, one were their mission of their three God's-being, preaching one the saviour, and the other who were part of splinter emissaries sent by the king of England to all the 'kings' recognised for peace treaty. However, since Equiano's defeat of his attackers who tried reslaving him over his already self bought freedom, in their own court, courtesy of the Brits impartial times of justice, and now his work on his auto-bio and his people's identity for the first time lightened in his work, and now, the just past happening in Haiti, a greater consciousness had become, and with England holding the ground in the country and references to formal discoveries of past and by Portugal, the discussions of happenings that formally shouldn't be let out nor shine, had overtaken the English church and it's sent missionaries, including Crowther and all the people that know this country.

Firstly, it had began with Marl Borough's revolt in 1752.

Marl Borough, had left England for Bonny and the Gold-coast in search of slaves together where she acquired a number of four hundred and twenty captives from these territories respectively, after which she set out for the Americas.

Captain Robert Codd decided to use twenty-eight of the captives, mainly of Igbo descent to help sail the ship. On October fourteen, the ship was taken over by the captives. The African men and women fought and killed thirty-three of the thirty-five crewmen, convincingly letting three alive to sail the ship back to where they got picked from.

The ships boys cooper, sail maker and the boats wain were the spared.

The ship sailed to Bonny first and the Africans from the region went ashore. The remaining men and women, cut off for the Gold-coast and upon reaching there, the ship and the remaining crew members were never seen again.

Again came the Igbos once more in their unrelent nature of freedom, its quest and every craze in its relation, so long as it be. The one that came

before the Haiti, and actually, that which caused the lifts of eye-lids; popularly called – the 'Igbo landing'.

Igbo captives have been taken to Georgia coast in the Americas, long after enduring several nightmares of the middle passage. Nonetheless, though known stubborn and unwilling to humiliation, neither submission and now even to be-see the true picture of what the thing it is of them, their captives regardless still found instinct desires in all risks of himself even, to seek and take them still.

Near the end of the voyage, as they were close to being disembarked, they boldly rose up and heroically fought their way through, despite being shackled – 'one against another', in heavy chains on their hands and foots all together – executing about three, they made their way through, past their captors placements.

Now, having escaped this placement and standing feverishly, in the captors heavily surroundedness, they men started speaking amongst themselves, and the words of an Ichie came speaking louder saying, 'look this people, referring to serving slaves, is this what we have been brought here to do, to serve our fellow men?'.

In a short, even before the arrival of armed policers that surely will over power them back to their shackles; led by the Ichie, the men were witnessed singing and matching in solidarity, and their song read; 'great-river \_ -Orimiri-Omambala brought us here, Orimiri Omambala we are going to return'.

'Orimiri Omambala bu anyi bia

Orimiri Omambala ka anyi ga ejina'.

And as they sang, they marched, and in this united solidarity, walked into the dock -'en suicide' – to become the first ever freedom march of all people's and people's that had been taken to the Europes and Americas.

In the end, in this marshy waters, that they drowned, a captain -Patterson, and another, managed to recover thirteen out of the seventy-five men and women who embarked in that freedom march, that their blood spoke for freedom.

'They are the men and women who chose death over slavery'. People of great ancestry from a land of no kings, now to think of servitude.

Busa's own revolt led to the first ever state establishment and all this being from one people, it became a thing of high-level questioning on the captors, missions, merchants and the English government.

'Oyibio' – Ezike had called out reaching these men and interrupting their discuss. 'I get some man I wan show you, I get for you' – Ezike carefully puts his pidgin English, and after a long talk and strong convincing – instinct, the two groups gave out two men from each, who stacked up their wears and armour and followed Ezike to where he confined Nwaubani in his pitiful state of helplessness.

In their return, their report had created disgruntle, angered the entire crew, who conflicted in their required resolves.

The trade was outlawed – yes, and they had with them the superior guns if escalations erupt, but while the missionaries kept on their insision that that boy they had seen was no different from themselves, just as Ezike stated but never stated how his got kidnapped and put on in the natives wear and so must be taken in all chance whatsoever without a penny, the other side, sent by the king, argued on their long attained success on achieving peace in this part of the country and so rather to cause another escalation, should silently make pay for Nwaubani's freedom; just as simple as the young man put it. This conflicting issue, however remained a no-no for the missions who believed not being equals and as such their own must neither be slaved and bought, unlike the craze of the people of the world part allowed them ment upon their own, against their own self interest.

Nevertheless, on the 'become', the mission took what they sort best, mindless bloodsheds, if so to be a price.

Early morning the next day, while the emissaries group where seen bathing in the waters and passing good times, the missions where noticed, some preparing for an event and slightly setting their ship up and the canoe with which to sail into it ready. Their machine-gun cleaned and their canon uncovered, and on their corner, everything seemed suspicious and unnormal even amongst the natives all around the place.

Now, the afore-taught eventuality came to be and in it, all hells gets about to be set lose.

A group of six redmen had been sighted walking into an unusual corner-not through the usual route to the villages and straight into the



bushy delta, suspectedly dressed in thick armoury wears, all with their guns in hand -but with one or two persons that had seen them that night very unclear, it had created no suspicion to cause alert, even in this reign of Eyo whose a strong-held ally of the English.

However, the arousals that later came was after a multiple gun shots, and people started arousing to check what was happening.

It happend that, the six mission men as planned by the whole had gone for a 'free or be persecuted' negotiation for Nwaubani and in disagreement, conflict broke between the two parties with Ezike setting his canoe to leave and the mission men in respond, sticking him with loads of bullets to his death. But now to the unfortunate, being seen running with a native just after the alarming gun shots, the people grieved and provoked; on how a people who meted punishment on slave dealers, now turned back to kidnap their own. Just at once all men for their guns and in no time, the hells got loosed and bullet spills came flying all around the premises and unmincing, the natives advanced, causing the whole area to an immediate war zone that even at this realization of the happening, the emissaries had also been forced into arms in combat.

Two of the mission men had been hit and one just injured and assisted in this four remain of their retreat. However, getting to their already readied ship, they set for sail, leaving the emissaries in the unfortunate fight as they too on sighting the missionaries came setting their sails in retreat against this heavy number of the natives.

Now, as they sailed away, farther from the bullets range, Nwaubani stepped up to the ships balcony from where he overlooked through the wide, the shore and its green land, and the flying bullets just as it was in the beginning of his entry.

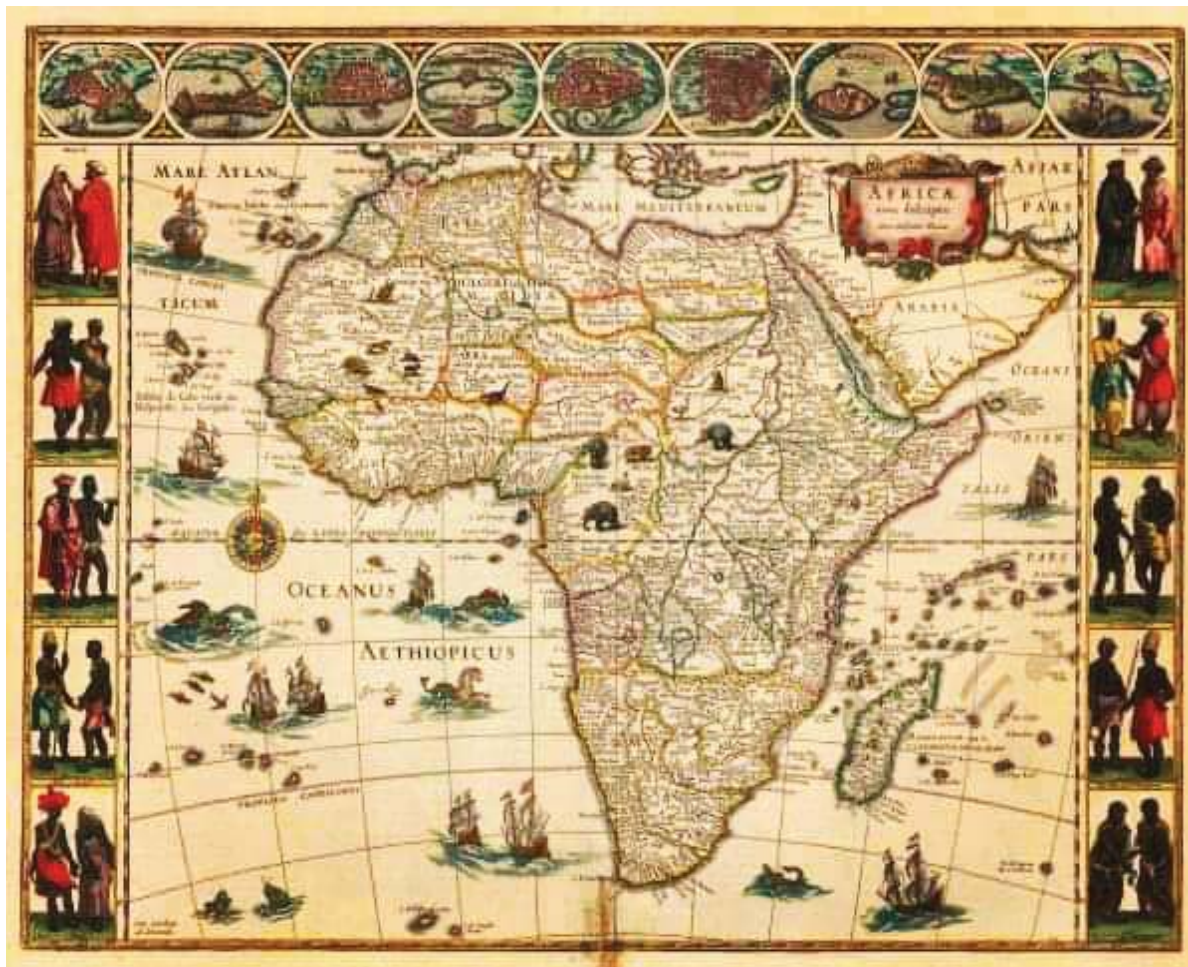
In his mind now, all he pictured was his captain and father, his crew and his brother -Agbara, his saviour and Ahamefula and himself and Stewart.

In Aro-Ikwere, the cry had ended of his loss and the hunters couldn't trace the smuggler. And later on, few month back in Arochukwu after tensions calmed off and Nwagbara went back into his shell for another plot, Ada put to bed in the ninth month of her pregnancy – a bouncing baby boy, so alike as Nwaubani.

This child; in weeping and tears full of joy, Ahamefula lifts upon to the face of the sun and called him -'Onochie', meaning 'this one has come to replace.



1300



1500



1600





1700

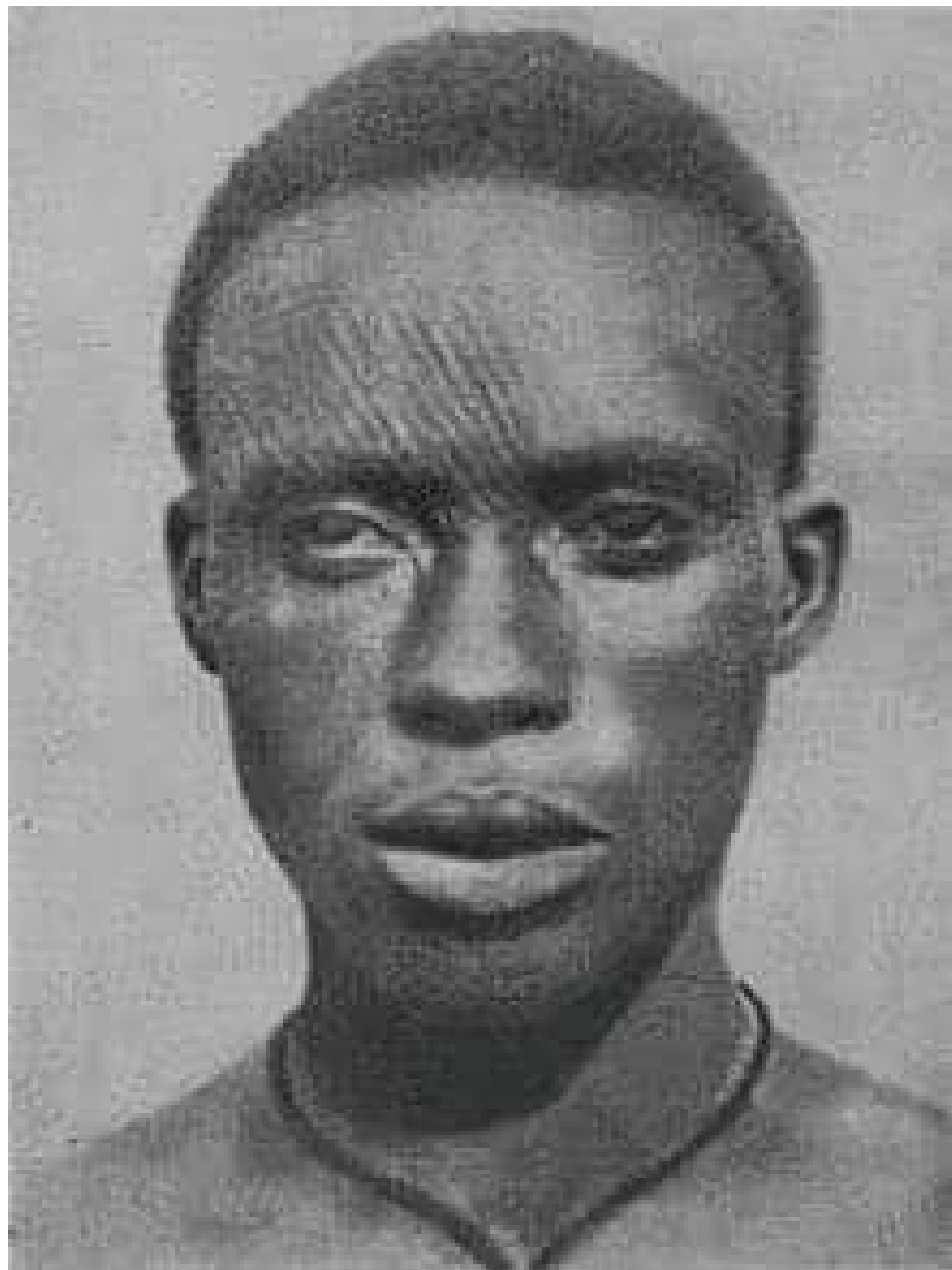


1800

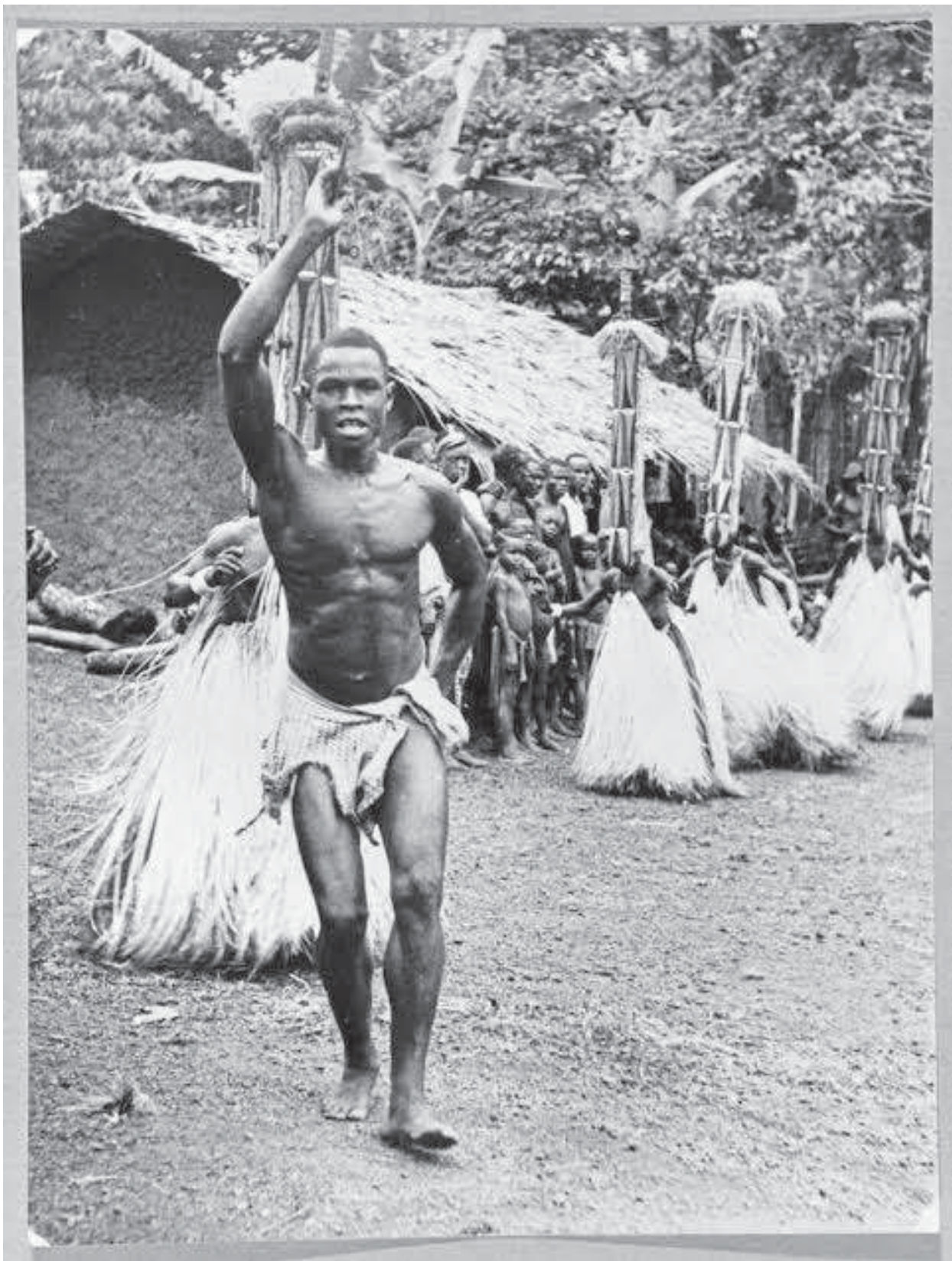












KID'S FIRST INSTITUTE INITIATION -MASQUERADE INITIATION





NDOKI



A PHYSICIAN -DIBIA





OHAFIA WAR MEN



INSIDE AN OHAFIA WARD





INSIDE AN ABIRIBA OBU



INSIDE  
AN  
OHAFIA  
OBU



A JIHADI HORSE MEN



MASQUERADE

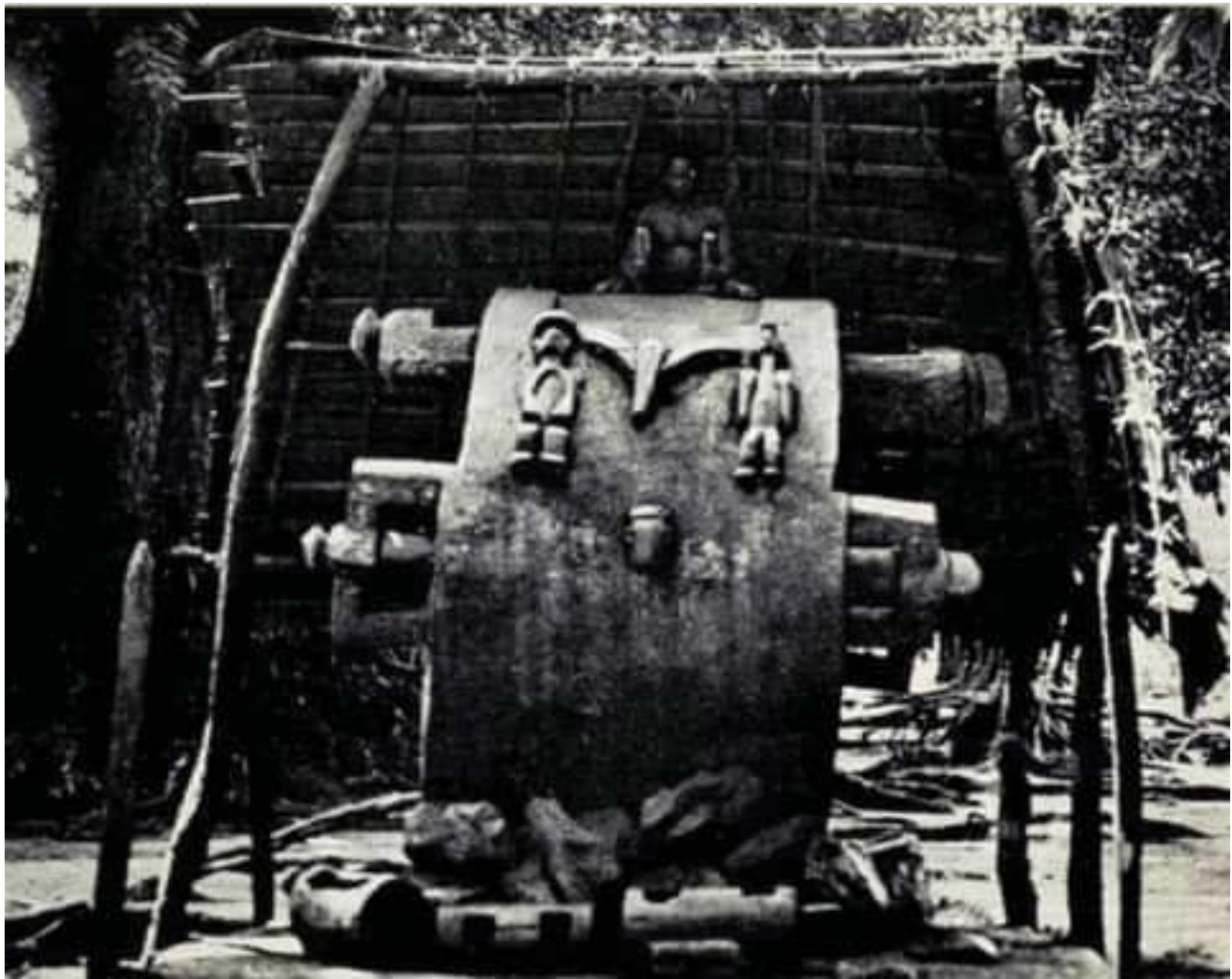




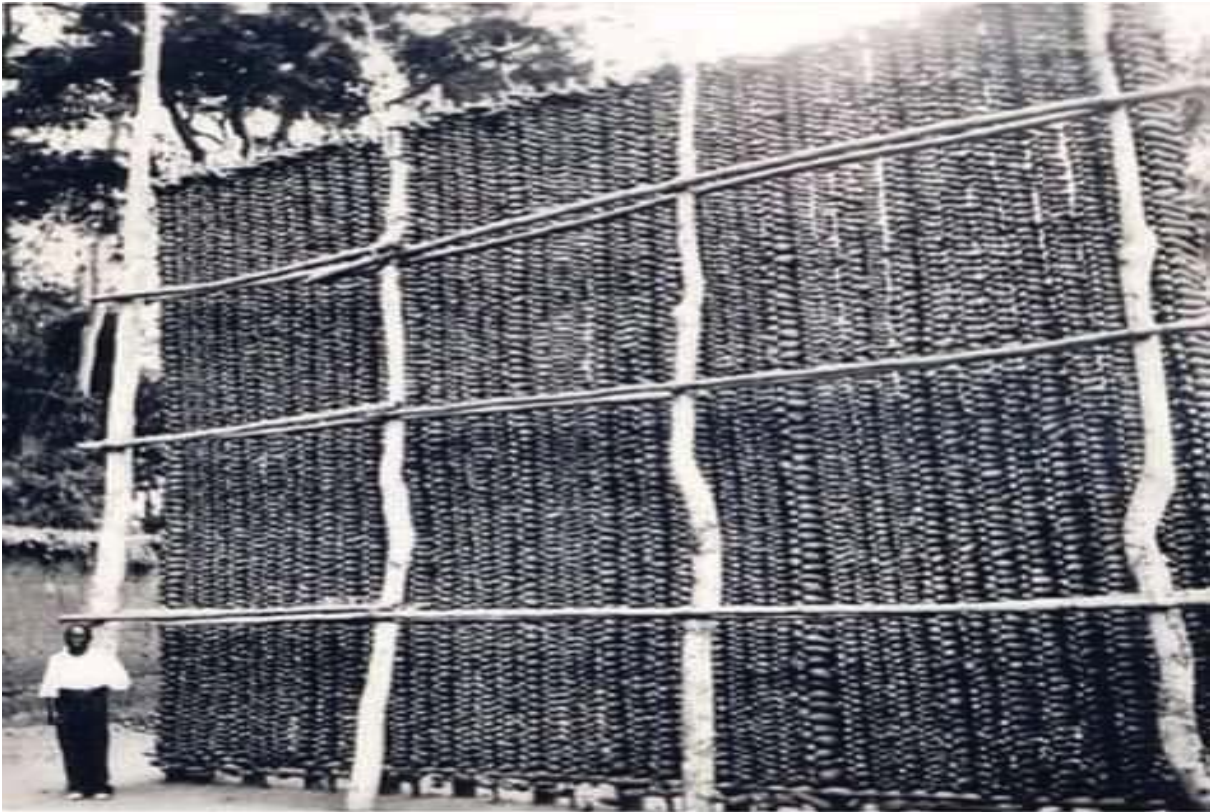
MAN BLOWING AN IVORY HORN



A RIVERSIDE YAM MARKET



AN IKORO



A SET OF  
YAM  
BARN



# Arochukwu, 'Punitive Expedition', Progress



Image: 'Burning Arochuku' Charles Partridge. 1902.

ARO FALL (AROCHUKWU).... AS IT WAS IN THE OLD, THE FALL OF JERUS.\* AND THE  
TEMPLE THERE-IN. ARO\* (OUR TEMPLE FELL -1901)



**EKUMEKU - A 30YEARS GUERILLA WAR, STARTING FROM DEFUNCT ORIMIRI ARO AREA OF OLD ASABA AGAINST THE BRITS, AFTER THE FALL. -Man in the middle an Odogwu.**



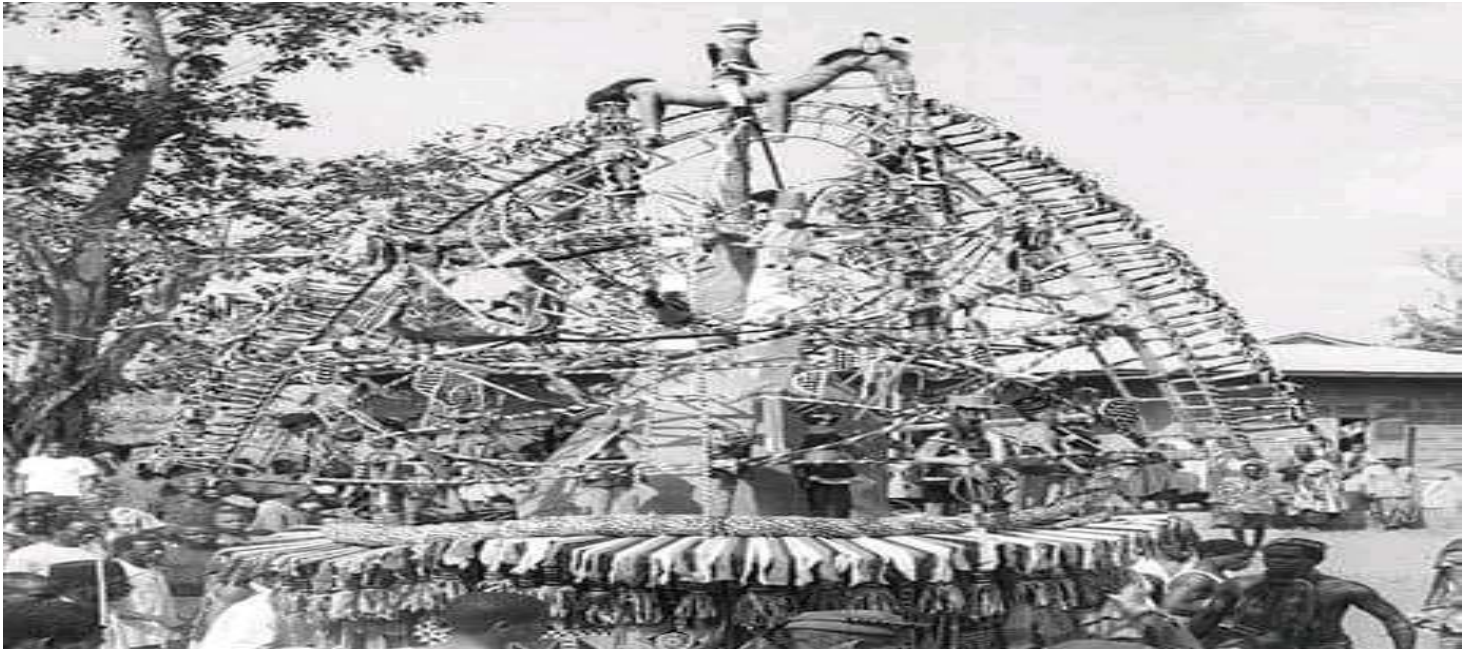


A GUERRILLA FIGHTER WITH SHIELD AND ON ARMOUR VEST



**FIGHTERS. ONE WITH A LONG SHIELD AND A SWORD, THE BOTH POSITIONED IN FIGHTING FORMATION.**

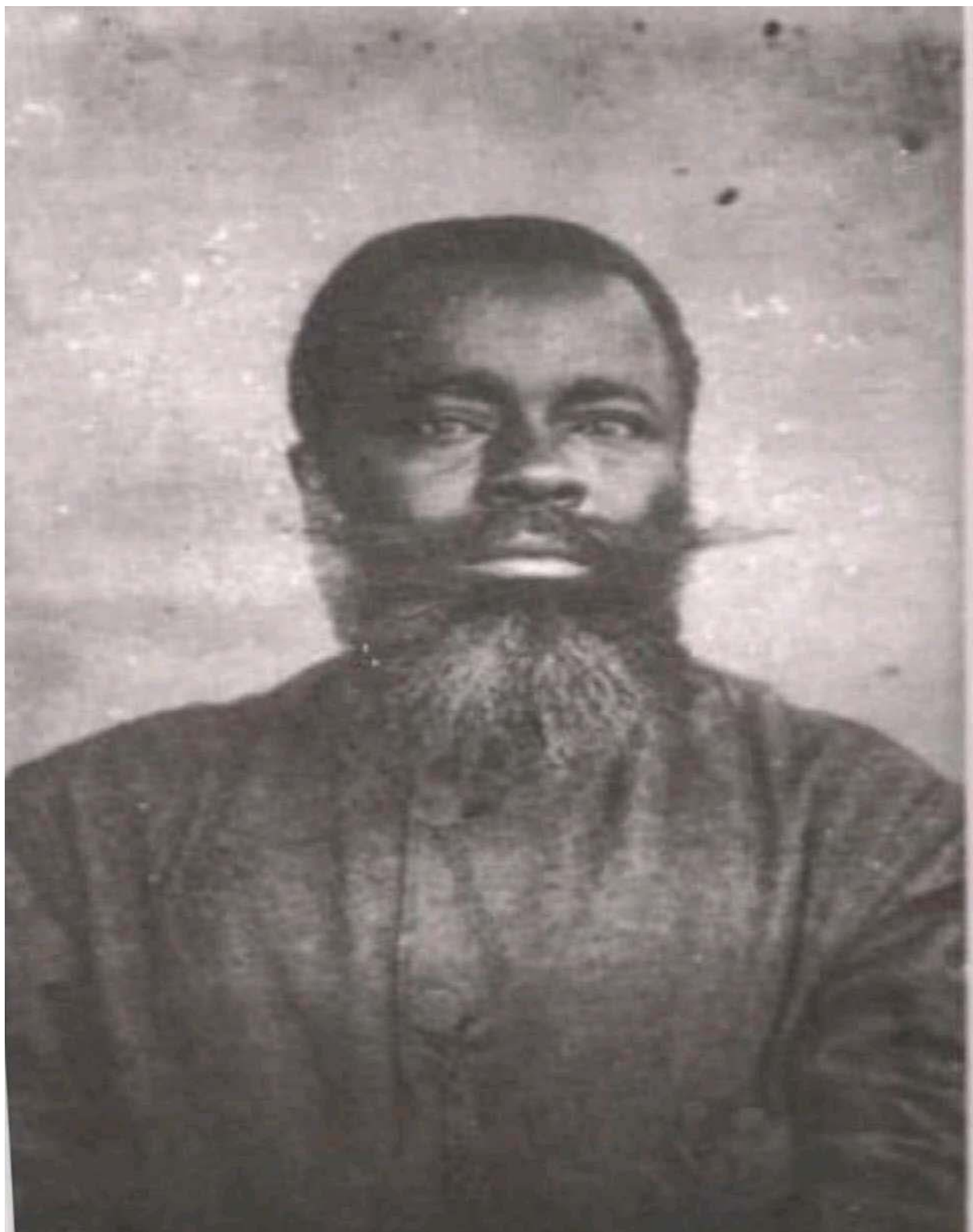




**MASQUERADE DEPICTING A RED HORSEMAN**



**AN ARTWORK, DEPICTING THE SEAL OF WISDOM, DANCING COMMUNITY, IGBO IDENTITY BOBBLE KAPPA, IVORIES, IVORY DEPICTED SEAL OF WISDOM, ARTS AND DRUMS.**



OKO JUMBO



MBANASO: -'JAJA OF OPOBO'





Carrying the corpse over the wall 2104

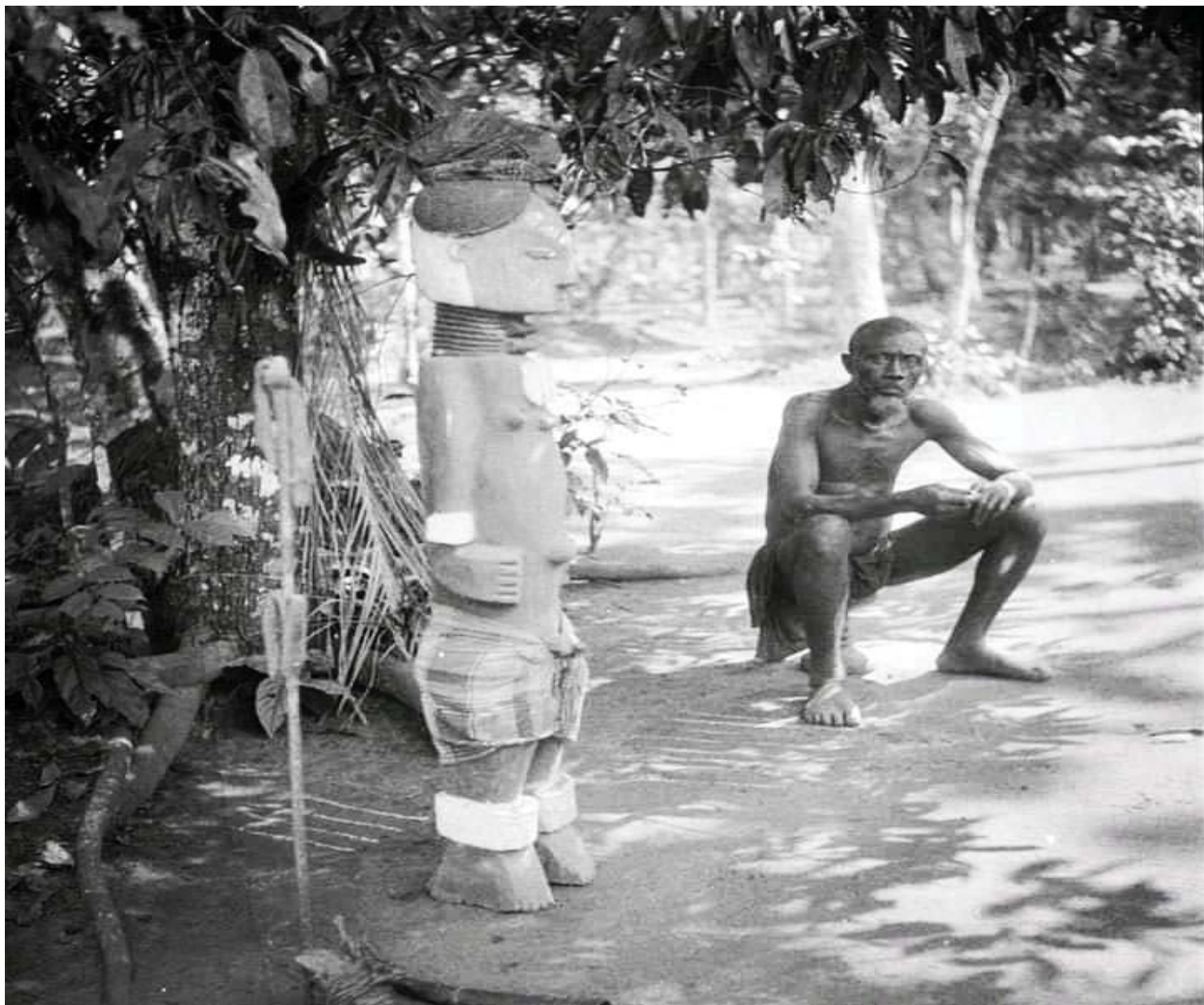


2104

On the way to the burial place 2105

CARRYING THE DEAD. -CORPSE COVERED IN TALLIT.





A MAN AND HIS ALUSI



AN NZE ON TALIT



**FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS JOINING ANOTHER IN HIS NEW HOME MAKING.**



**COUPLE OF WOMEN DRESSED IN FULL AKWANSI OR AKWAETE WEAR AS PRONOUNCED IN MOST DIALECTS -TALLITS.**





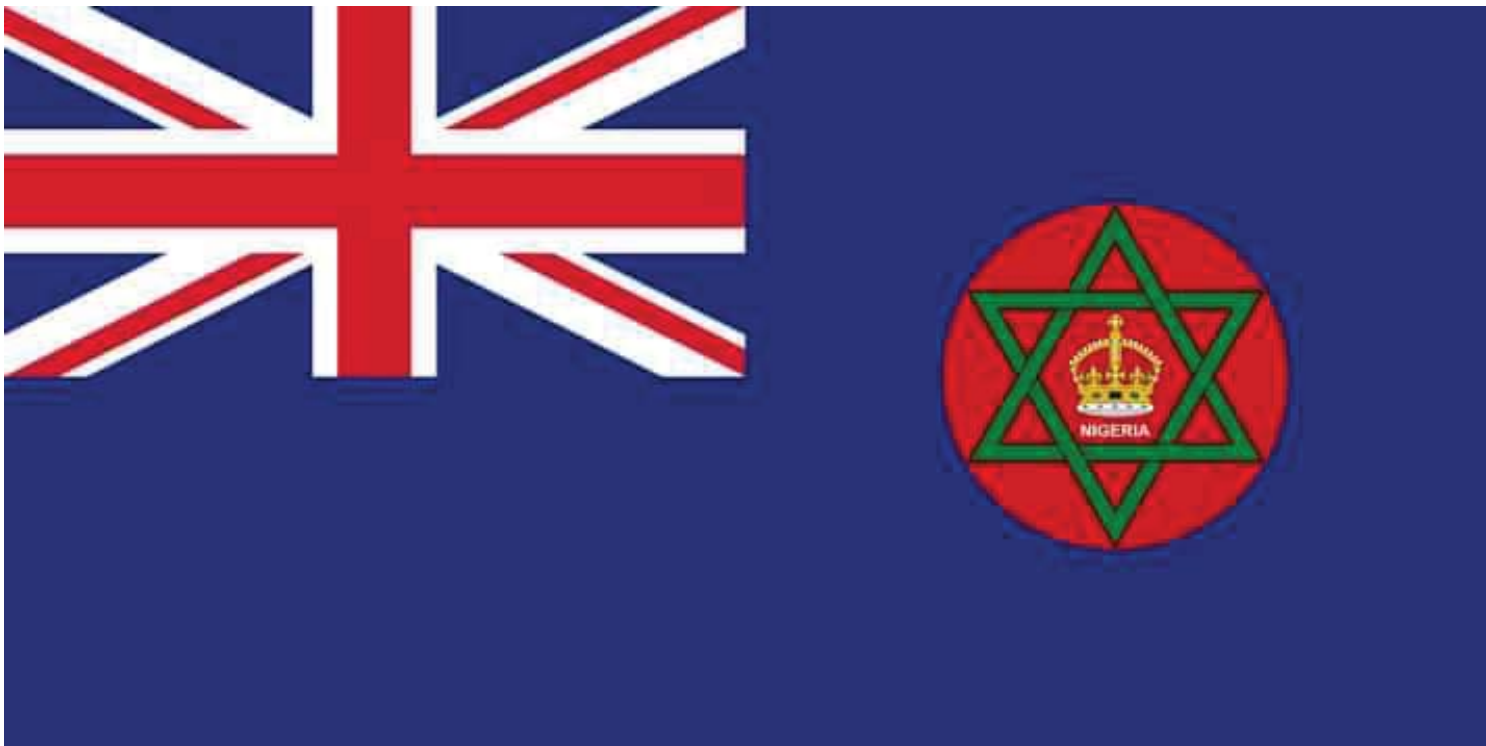
(a)

IBO COIFFURES. (b)

(a) IKWERRI IBO WOMAN MOURNING THE DEATH OF HER HUSBAND. NOTICE THE CLAY IMPRINTS OF HANDS.

AN ETCHE IBO MATRON.





WITNESS: BRITAINS FIRST COLONIAL FLAG, IN RELATION TO THEIR WITNESS.







The little we could see of the houses with which the shore is interspersed gave us a very favourable impression of the judgment and cleanliness of the inhabitants of the town. They are neatly built of yellow clay, plastered over, and thatched with palm-leaves; yards sprucely fenced are annexed to each of them, in which plantains, bananas, and cocoa-trees grow, exhibiting a pleasing sight, and affording a delightful shade.

We are concerned with three distinct peoples: the Berbers, the Arabs, and the Jews. All three belong to the Caucasian branch of the human family, the same branch as the Europeans. The Berbers are 'Hamites'. Hamitic-speaking peoples have lived in Africa probably at least as long as the Negroes. Many of the peoples at present inhabiting north-eastern Africa, from the southern limits of Egypt to the north of Kenya, seem to have developed as the result of varying degrees of racial mixing over a very long period of years between Hamites and Negroes. In North Africa from Cyrenaica westwards, however, the Hamitic Berbers retained their racial characteristics relatively intact, and they still form the predominant racial group.



quarter of a million Arabs entered North Africa during this period, and among the results of the invasions were the Berbers' acquirement of an element of Arab blood and their acceptance of Arabic as a language and Islam as their religion.

The early history of the Jews in North Africa is not so clear. The existence of a considerable Jewish community in Cyrenaica is known from Roman sources, particularly of the first and second centuries A.D. When the Arabs first invaded North Africa in the seventh century, they found Jewish colonies established among the Berber tribes to as far west as Morocco. The greater part of the Berbers in North Africa were sedentary agricultural people, and the Jews had settled among them as craftsmen, merchants, and cattle farmers. But the Berbers also included a number of pastoral tribes. Some of these led a nomadic life in the steppe lands between the agricultural zone of North Africa and the Sahara, and it seems probable that some of these tribes of nomadic Berber herdsmen came under some degree of Jewish influence. It was these tribes, very similar to the present-day Tuareg, who were the first to make permanent contact with the Negroes of the Sudan. In the search for more grazing land for their flocks they pushed south into the Sahara and Mauretania, and before

TELLING ALSO ABOUT THE ARABS AND JIHADI'S WHO CAME AFTERWARDS

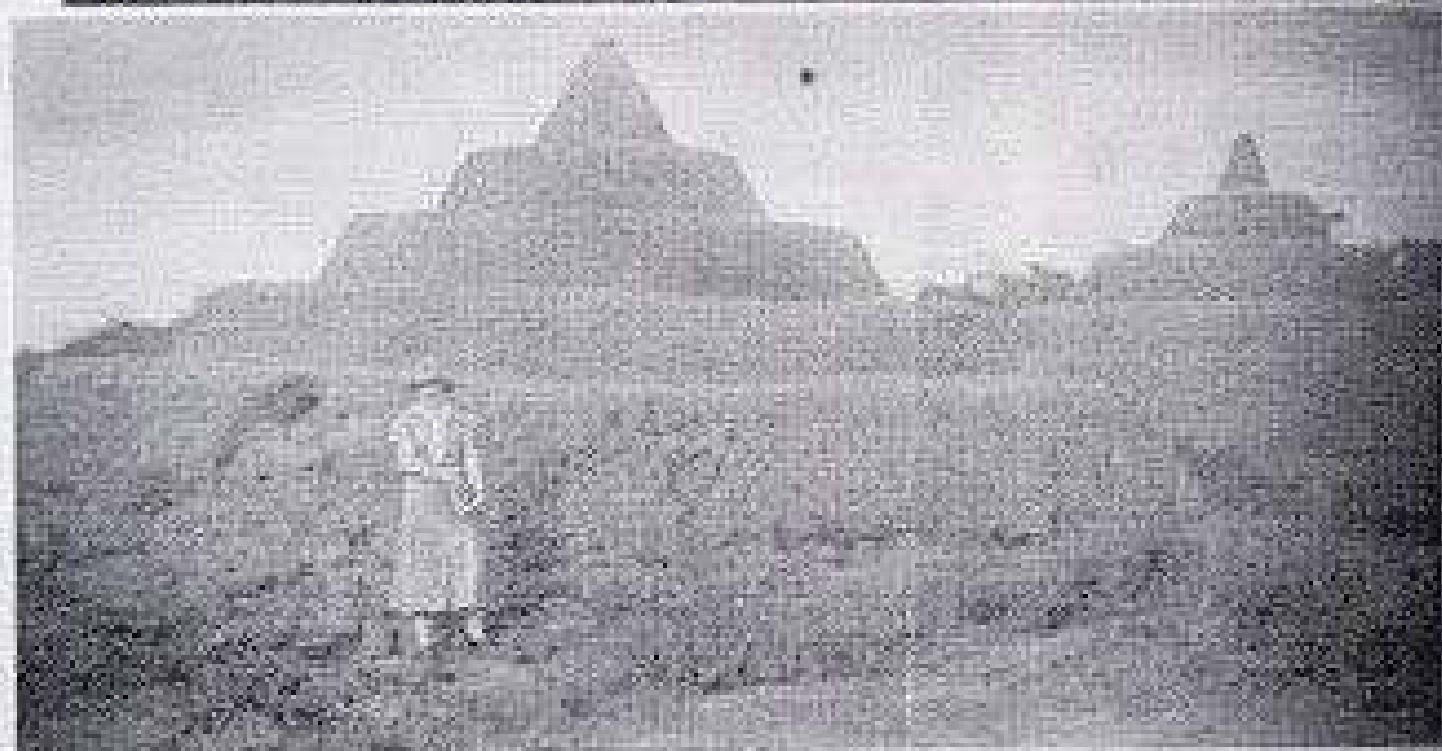
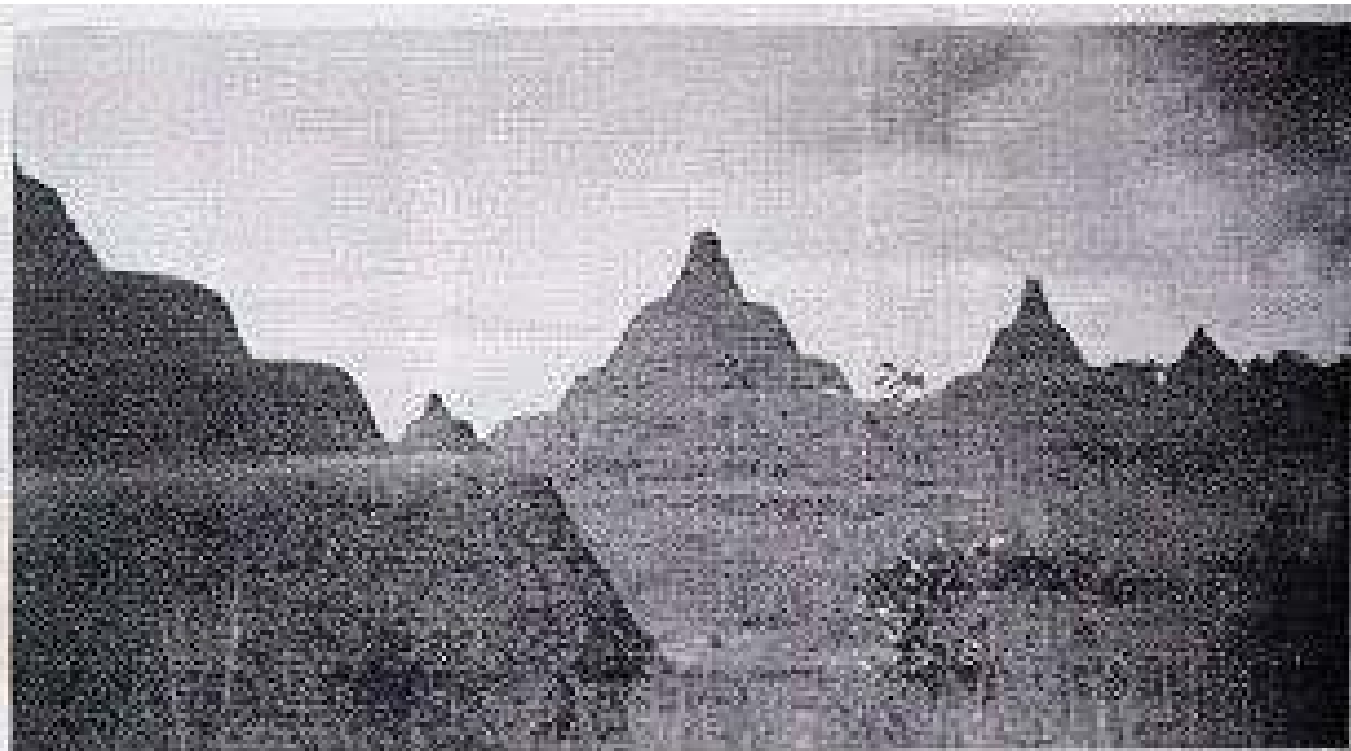
from North Africa. As we have seen, the identity of these settlers is not certain. They may have been simply Berber pastoralists, but there is some reason to believe that if not actually Jews, they were Berbers who had come under Jewish influence and who may have possessed some Jewish strain. At some time about the fourth century, the immigrants seem to have established their rule over the Negroes among whom they were living, and founded a dynasty (traditionally of forty-four kings) which ruled over Aukur and Hodh until the end of the eighth century. In about 770, this dynasty was overthrown by a Negro Soninke dynasty, which then ruled in Ghana until at least the time of the Almoravid conquest.

The 'white' inhabitants of Ghana, by now much modified by intermarriage with the Soninke, seem to have fled to Tekrur, a state extending from north of the lower Senegal into Futa, and inhabited by Tucolor, Woloff and Serer peoples. Intermarriage with the Tucolor ruling class enabled the 'whites' to secure political control of the state until in the eleventh century they were expelled by a Tucolor revival. By this time the 'whites' were to all intents and purposes a Negro people speaking a Negro language. These were the people today known as Fulani, whose language is akin to Serere and Woloff.

ECCLESIASTES -JIHADI

**#THINGS NOW TO BE KNOWN**





WITH A MAP AND APPENDICES.

PUBLISHED WITH THE SANCTION OF HER MAJESTY'S  
GOVERNMENT.

BY

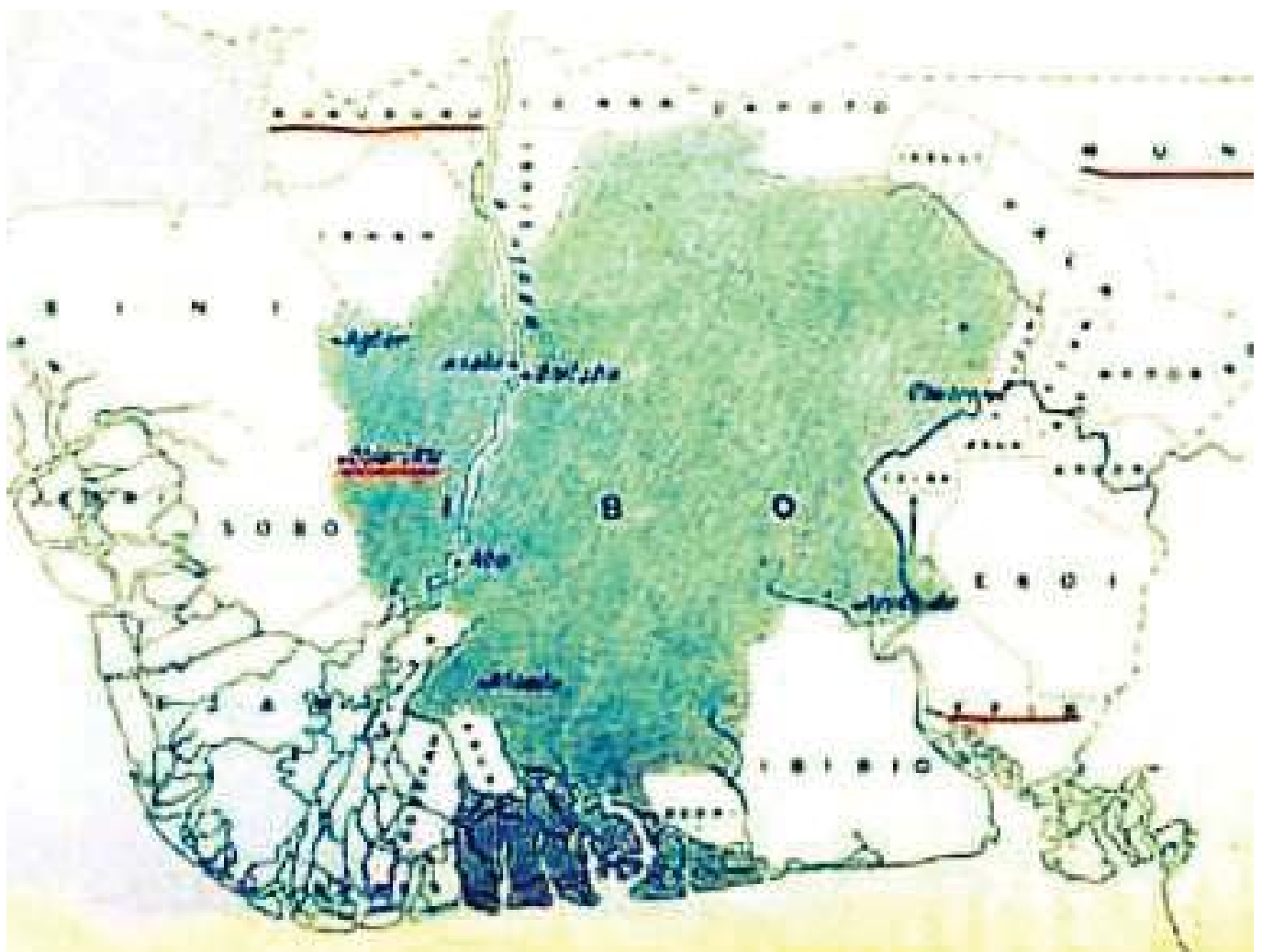
WILLIAM BALFOUR BAIKIE,

M.D.E.N., F.R.G.S., F.S.A. SCOT., ETC. IN COMMAND OF THE EXPEDITION.



PRINCE TSHUKUMA.

ET CETERA





## THE BREAKING OF THE LONG JUJU

ACROSS THE RIVER to the north-west, between the Cross River and the Niger, lay a large, populous and virtually unknown country. This was the home of the Ibos, known for centuries to slave traders as the source of some of the sturdiest, most intelligent of their cargoes but—since traders, officials and missionaries alike groped inland by way of the river arteries—in 1900 still a blank on the map. Between Iboland and the sea lived the Ibibios, speaking a variant of the Efik language.

Access to this region had long been denied by the power of the Delta chiefs. Even those up-river stations where Europeans had established themselves tended to be outposts of the coastal tribes rather than an integral part of the adjacent country. The only Africans to move freely in and about these districts seem to have been the slave-dealers, many of them agents of the great Ibo god Chuku and members of the Aro tribe.

The Aros were a clever people, numbering some fifty thousand and holding unquestioned sway over a wide region through the power of the mysterious oracle known in pidgin English as "The Long Juju". For centuries they had shipped slaves south through the great market at Itu down the Cross River to the sea, northward across the hills of Bende to the Niger and thence—impossible as it seems—into the slave caravans of the Sahara. The Ibo language could be heard spoken on the Mediterranean coast of Africa, in Virginia, Brazil and Cuba. Professor Dike believes that the bulk of slaves exported from the Cross River were obtained through the agency of the Oracle, more than were obtained by kidnapping and raids. The town (or group of villages) known as Arochuku, where the Oracle was situated, was a few miles from the head of the Enyong Creek, on the doorstep into Ibo country. At the sacred grove, primed by agents who infiltrated nearly every town and village, pilgrims, petitioners and litigants arrived to beg Chuku's favour, or his help in settling quarrels. All practical authority over some hundreds of square miles lay in the hands of the Aro priests.



### **Egboes are imitative and emulative**

The Egboes are considered the most imitative and emulative people in the whole of Western Africa; place them where you will, or introduce to them any manners and customs, you will find that they very easily adapt themselves to them. Stout-hearted, or, to use the more common phraseology, big-hearted, they always possess a desire of superiority, and make attempts to attain it, or excel in what is praiseworthy, without a desire of depressing others. To them we may well apply the language of Dryden—

population; and as the trade in slaves increased, these towns, particularly Bonny, grew into importance. The king of New Calabar, in the neighbourhood, and Pepple, king of Bonny, were both of Eboe descent, of which also are the mass of the natives; and the number of the slaves from the Eboe country, which, throughout the existence of the British trade were taken from Bonny, amounted to perhaps

**The inhabitants of Bonny, when our author last visited that port, amounted to about 3,000. They are chiefly a mixture of the Eboe, or Heebo, and the Brass tribes; the latter deriving their name from the importation into their country, which lies to the northward and westward of Bonny, of a kind of European-made brass pans, known in the trade by the name of neptunes, and used for the making of palm oil and salt, with which last the countries in the**



## 5. TERMINOLOGY FROM KING PEPPEL.

Bonny is called Okoloma by themselves,

„ Okoloba, Obani, or Ibani, by the Ibos.

„ Osiminiku by Abo tribe of Ibo.

New Calabar is called Bom by the Ibo.

King Peppel said that Bonny was chiefly peopled by Ibo slaves, though they speak the Okoloma or Bonny language, which is also the language of New Calabar.

I remain, Rev. and Dear Sir,

Your obedient humble servant,

SAMUEL CROWTHER.

\* This name, Peppel king of Bonny, told me is applicable to the true God, others more to country fashion.

AND DUE THE IGBO LESSER POPULATION OF NEW CALABAR, BOM IS OVERSHADOWED

from Old Kalabár meet for trade. Not far from this stands the noted city of A'ro or A'no, where is the celebrated shrine of *Tshúku*, or the deity to which pilgrimages are made, not only from all parts of I'gbo proper, but from Old Kalabár, from the tribes along the coast, and from Orú, and Nímbe or Brass. The city is described as being nearly three times the size of Abó, and as extremely populous. The inhabitants are skilful artisans, and manufacture swords, spears, and metallic ornaments, specimens of all of which I have seen, and can therefore testify to their being very

trinkets a considerable quantity. The village, which is the first one in the Orú country, is named Agbéri, and the chief, called Agbekúm, had been on board as we passed on our ascent. Since that time he had been on a pilgrimage to A'ro, to inquire why his wife had no children, and from this place he had but just returned. Mr. Crowther and I were delighted at such an opportunity presenting itself of getting some direct information about this mysterious place, so as soon

The Eboes, tho' not generally a robust, are a well-formed people, of the middle stature : many of their women are of remarkably symmetrical shape, and if white, would in Europe be deemed beautiful. This race is, as has been already remarked, of a more mild and engaging disposition than the other tribes, particularly the Quaws, and though less suited for the

“THIS VERY WONDERFUL LADY”

97

the natives and her own unbounded courage and energy. The mother in this case was a slave woman—an Eboe, the most expensive and valuable of slaves. She was the property of a big woman who had always treated her—as indeed most slaves are treated in Calabar—with great kindness and consideration, but when these



add, that these good "niggers" were the almost civilized inhabitants of Yóruba, Nupe, Hausa, and other countries in Sudan, the very people to whom I had gone forth as a missionary. They, at least, according to the inflexible laws of nature, deserved a better fate than slavery; for if rights and relations are the just results of properties, (or character, which they undoubtedly are,) these people had a right to remain unmolested in their native land. Every planter who is forty years old, knows the great difference in the character of "new niggers." The short, stubby, silly fellows often brought into the slave markets, were chiefly from Congo, south of the line, where all the people (imported to America) have an affinity to the Hottentots. The "Gulla niggers," were from Golah country on the St. Paul's river, where they still vegetate, about the meanest of the human race, and amply worthy of the cotton field. The "Eboe nigger," was from a fine open country, above the delta of the Niger, and not from the delta itself, as we have commonly supposed.\* At home he was a noble, high-minded and half civilized man, who beautified his fine country with well cultivated farms and shady villages. In America he was trusty, intelligent and industrious, but remarkable for an absolutely indomitable spirit, to which even the master must yield, when the Eboe was aroused, unless he should choose to shoot down the best slave on his plantation. No wonder: for the Eboes in common with the Sudanese, have undergone a strong Caucasian innervation, which is evidenced by the fact that some of them are nearly white. The rest of the

---

\* There is a village, but no country or tribe, called Eboe.



all is calm and quiet again.' The Egboes cannot be driven to an act; they become most stubborn and bull-headed; but with kindness they could be made to do anything, even to deny themselves of their comforts. They would not, as a rule, allow anyone to act the superior over them, nor sway their conscience, by coercion, to the performance of any act, whether good or bad, when they have not the inclination to do so; hence there is not that unity among them that is found among other tribes; in fact, everyone likes to be his own master. As a rule, they like to see every African prosper. Among their own tribe, be they ever so rich, they feel no ill-will toward them. A poor man or woman of that tribe, if they meet with a rising young person of the same nationality, are ready to render him the utmost service in their power. They give him gratuitous advice, and 'embrace him as their child;' but if he is arrogant and overbearing, they regard him with scorn and disdain wherever he is met. When half-educated, the young men are headstrong and very sensitive; they take offence at the least unmeaning phrase, and become very impertinent.

Although there are considerable dialectic differences among the Egboes in the different parts of this extensive country, such as those between Elugu on the north and Ebane or Bonny on the south, yet still in their country or in Egboeland 'each person hails, as a sailor would say, from the particular district where he was born;' but when in a foreign country or when away from their home all are Egboes. The Bonnians and Eluguans are hailed by one national name. In some districts of Egboe, in Ndoko and



It is also to be observed, that there is a marked difference in the dispositions of the different tribes of Africans who are *imported* into this country. The Eboe is crafty, saving, and industrious, artful and disputative in driving a bargain, and suspicious of being overreached by others with whom he deals. The

Eboe may be called the Jew of the negro race, though they themselves say that they are like the Scotch; a very large proportion of which nation reside in this part of the world, and generally succeed, by their diligence, their perseverance, their economy, and industry, in their respective pursuits.

#### **Position of Women in the Egboe Country**

Among the Egboes, women hold a very superior rank in the social scale; they are not regarded, as among other heathen tribes, as an inferior creation and doomed to perpetual degradation, but occupy their 'rightful status in society.' Nothing would, however, induce them to place a woman on the throne as their ruler; this they consider as subverting nature itself. In colloquy with the King of Nsube, Mr. Taylor was asked what was the name of his king. On being told that he had no king, but a queen, the king drew back with astonishment and said, 'What! Can woman rule over man?' This, he afterwards said, accounts for the greatness of England, as there is no partiality among her people.

#### *A noble emulation beats their breasts.*

Place an Egboe man in a comfortable position, and he will never rest satisfied until he sees others occupying the same or a similar position. Of this emulative power, the Right Rev. Bishop Crowther, scarcely a year after the establishment of the Church Missionary station at Onitsha, in Izuama Egboe, thus wrote: 'From all I could gather by observation, the Iboes are very emulative. As in other things, so it will be in book learning. Other towns will not rest satisfied until they have also learned the mystery of reading and writing, by which their neighbours might surpass them and put them in the shade.'



Again, when the Expedition of 1854 ascended the Niger, the Commissioner, on visiting the son of the late king, Tshukumia by name, found him attired in the following style, ready to receive him. He had on a 'woollen nightcap, a white shirt, and home-built pantaloons of native manufacture, shaped after an extreme Dutch de sign.' The younger brother, who was received on board, appeared 'dressed in home-made scarlet cloth trousers, a scarlet uniform coat, a pink beaver hat, under which, apparently to make it fit, was a red worsted nightcap, no shoes, beads round the neck, and in his hand a Niger Expedition sword.' Now these men have never been on the seacoast, and have no connexion or communication direct or even indirectly with civilized men, so as to learn their habits, so that their imitative faculty must have been excited by the Expedition of 1841, which made but a few hours' stay in their town, and yet they persevere and imitate what then struck them.

But this quality is essential to civilization and advancement; it is the second passion belonging to society. 'This passion' writes Burke, 'arises from much the same cause as sympathy. This forms our manners, our opinions, our lives. It is one of the strongest links of society.' This is proved in the fact, as says the Rev. Alex. Crummel, 'that all civilization is carried down from generation to generation, or handed over from the superior to the inferior, by means of the principles of imitation, based on sympathy.

A people devoid of this passion are incapable of improvement, and not only must stand still, unimpressive, but, by another law of nature, which makes progress a

### **The Population of the Egboes**

The population of Egboe is unknown. Unlike the countries between the River Volta and the Niger, where at this present moment external slavery is being carried on, and Dahomy making yearly devastation among peaceful populations, Egboe, since 1835, has been freed from these internal convulsions.<sup>2</sup> There is no large, independent, warlike power in its neighbourhood, as in Ashantee and Dahomy; but the population, since the limitation of the external slave-trade has been known to be wonderfully increased; and, judging from the extent and population of the known towns along the banks of the river and on the sea-coast, it will not be far short of the mark if we state the whole at from 10,000,000 to 12,000,000, all of whom speak one language, with slight dialectic differences.

spoken of with great reverence and respect, 'almost at times with a degree of veneration. The inhabitants speak the languages of the surrounding tribes, which are heard among the crowded pilgrim votaries who throng the shrine,' but they speak principally the dialects of Elugu and Isuama.



## **Egboe Religion and Probable Origin**

We come now to the consideration of the most important subject relative to the Egboe race—viz., their religion and probable origin.

The religion of the Egboes is Judaism, intermixed with numerous pagan rites and ceremonies. They believe in the existence of one Almighty, Omnipotent, Omnipresent Being, whom they worship as such, and regard as the Omniscient God who concerns himself with the affairs of man. He is known by the name of *Tshuku*, contracted sometimes into *Tshi*. They also admit the existence of another God, or a superior being, who, in one part of the country, is called Orissa, and in another *Tshuku-Okeke*, or 'God the Creator,' or 'the Supreme God,' thus showing that the nation believes in the division of the Godhead—in two beings each equal in power and influence, yet differing in the Godhead; but the existence of a third person does not seem to be admitted or known by them. *Tshuku*,<sup>4</sup> the Omniscient God, who is supposed to preserve them from harm, communicates with his people through his priests, who reside in a city set apart as holy by all the nation. This place is called Aro or Ano, to which pilgrimages are made, not only from all parts of Egboe, including the tribes along the Coast—vim, Oru, Nimbe, and Brass—but also from Old Calabar in the far east. This city, where the holy shrine of *Tshuku* exists, is extremely populous, and is

<sup>4</sup> The Rev. J. C. Taylor gives the following as a propitiatory prayer made by a woman called Wamah, of Abo, to Tshi whilst offering a sacrifice of goat: '*Biko Tshi, mere'm ihoma, ngi wo ndu, biko kpere Tshuku Abiama, gwa ya obi'm dum ma biko wopo ihinye ojo di na obi'm tsufu Amusu, mekwa akku bia'm, lekwa ehu, ngi.* (I beseech thee, my guide, make me good; thou hast life. I beseech thee to intercede with God the Spirit. Tell him my heart is clean. I beseech thee to deliver me from all bad thoughts in my heart; drive out all witchcrafts; let riches come to me; see your sacrificed goat; see your kola nuts; see your rum and palm wine.'—'Niger Expedition, 1857-59.' Crowther and Taylor. Page 348.

## **Jewish Origin of the Egboe Tribe**

Do not these religious rites and ceremonies remind us forcibly of the Jewish Dispensation, when sacrifices were made to atone for the sins of the people? And does this not present an emphatic proof of what Mr. Locker wrote, that apart from the native religion of Africa, Judaism forms an element which enters Africa by the natural current of nations from the north-east, from Egypt, Ethiopia, and Northern Africa; that though there are comparatively few Jews south of the Sahara and Abyssinia, still, by the connexion of the Jews with African countries since the days of Moses, Abraham, Joseph, Solomon, as well as the destruction of Jerusalem, and the consequent scattering of the Jews all over the globe, the influence of Judaism on Africa is greater and farther diffused than that of the Jews and their geographical extension. If we take, for instance, the race under consideration, I will go still further, and assert that the more we study them in all their various relationships, the more shall we be convinced that they form a portion of those lost tribes who disobeyed the command of God and were dispersed, but are now mingled with the original inhabitants of the country, and so degenerate in the form in which they now appear.



But to prove this further we must admit the acknowledged and every-day fact that the moving passion of men's minds, even from time immemorial, is a disposition to change their abode; thus the children of Israel, directed by some supernatural influence, migrated from Egypt to Canaan, expelled its inhabitants, and became sole masters of the land. The Phoenicians of ancient date were characterised by their spirit of enterprise, and they formed colonies in various quarters of the eastern hemisphere. Adopting the views entertained in Northern Africa, we should conclude that migration was the natural effect of a far greater or more important cause. It is affirmed to be an immutable and essential decree of the Creator, who, when he placed the sun and stars in the firmament, and directed their diurnal and apparent courses from east to west, ordained that mankind should not be an exception to a law which was intended for all the earth.

Under these considerations we see that the opening line between Egypt and Arabia—between Africa and Asia—known as the Isthmus of Suez, plays an important part in the history of Africa as it formed the gateway for Asiatic emigration, and, consequently, at various times, numerous occidental tribes poured into Northern Africa through Egypt, either peacefully as emigrants and settlers, receiving special licence, as at the time of the Abaside monarchy, or by force of arms. We find amongst the earliest tribes who tread the soil of Africa, the Babylonians, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the greater part, if not all the Canaanites, which last were doomed to destruction by the hands of Joshua, and, if we believe the account of Procopius, 'while the army was on its march in pursuit of Gillimere who was afterwards led captive to Justinian by his general, Bellisarius, it halted near the Numedian frontier, where a sculptured stone was found, whereon was written or engraved in Punic—i.e. Phoenician—characters, which nearly correspond with the Hebrew, "We are the remnants of those tribes who fled before the robber Joshua, the son of Nun."

bulbifera. In colour the **Eboes** are much fairer than the neighbouring people of the coast, many of them being of a light copper colour. Their physiognomy is that of the Negro, with retreating foreheads, flat noses, and thick lips.\*

"that they are a fine race of people, and very superior to their neighbours who occupy the country of lower level, which borders on the sea." They are tall and robust, capable of enduring great fatigue, frequently paddling large canoes for forty-eight hours without taking food. Their diet

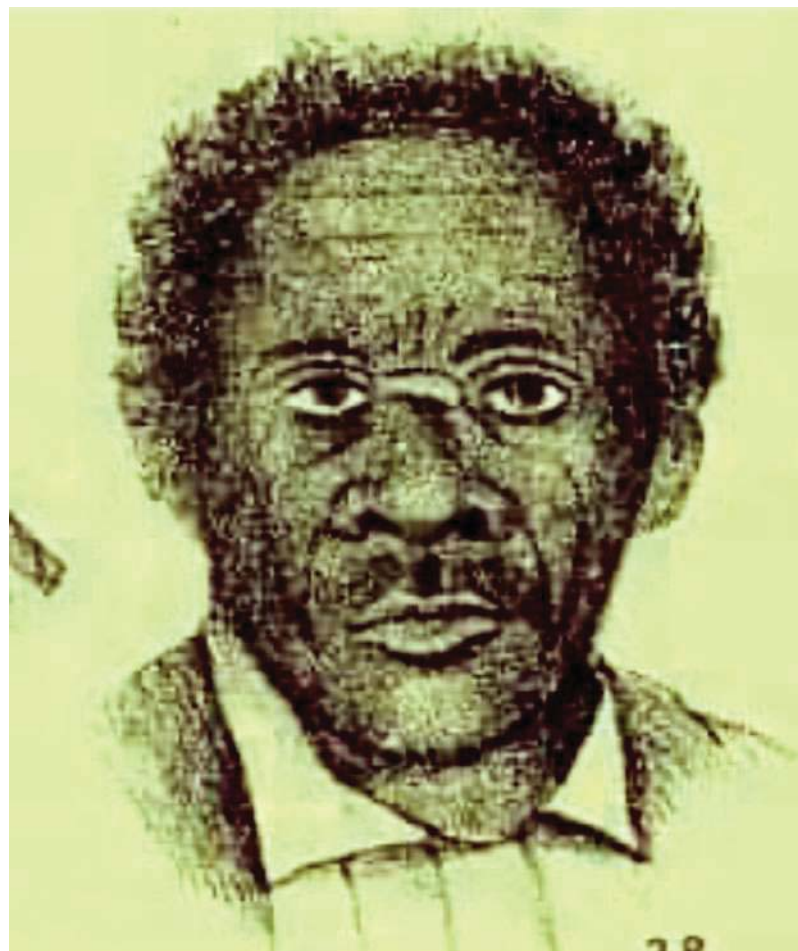


The inhabitants of Bonny, when our author last visited that port, amounted to about 3,000. They are chiefly a mixture of the Eboe, or Heebo, and the Brass tribes; the latter deriving their name from the importation into their country, which lies to the northward and westward of Bonny, of a kind of European-made brass pans, known in the trade by the name of neptunes, and used for the making of palm oil and salt, with which last the countries in the interior have been supplied by the coast from the earliest times on record. The article is now largely imported from Liverpool, both to Bonny and Calabar. The Eboes, who are also from a neighbouring country, have already been spoken of as a superior race, and the inhabitants, generally, are a fair dealing people, and much inclined to a friendly traffic with Europeans, who humour their peculiarities. Their general honesty, when the loose nature of their laws, as respects Europeans, and the almost entire absence of the moral influence of religion amongst them, are considered, affords a favourable prognostic of what the negro character would be if placed under the restraints and precepts of an enlightened system of jurisdiction.

of country up to the Rio Formoso, where however they are called Ejó or Ojó, by which name also they are known at Abó, at Brass, and even at Bonny. By English palm-oil traders they are often termed Jo-men. Throughout all this district but one language is spoken, with but very little dialectal difference. There is no one king or chief, but every village has its own headman. The people are a wild, rude, and treacherous race, savage, and often unprepossessing in look. Both male and female are much tattooed over the chest and arms, while the particular mark of the tribe is a thick, straight cut down the centre of the forehead and nose, and generally also three lines extending diagonally across the cheek from the inner angle of the eye. The one down the forehead, which is very prominent, and gives a peculiar and unpleasant expression to the countenance, is performed in child-

---





No. 28. A native of the Eboe country, which is situated upon the eastern bank of the river Niger. The individual represented is one of those Eboes called "Ebretchies," on account of the scalping process to which they are subjected in their youth. The forehead is deeply scarred, whilst small flaps of skin are reflected over, and project from the root of the nose and corners of the eyebrows, resembling, to some extent, the wattles of the domestic turkey. The fortunate individuals amongst the Eboes who survive this barbarous operation, it appears, enjoy amongst their countrymen rank and station. The Eboes are a numerous and thriving people at Sierra Leone, and several of them are wealthy and influential.



**“that they are a fine race of people, and very superior to their neighbours who occupy the country of lower level, which borders on the sea.” They are tall and robust, capable of enduring great fatigue, frequently paddling large canoes for forty-eight hours without taking food. Their diet**

**is better than that of the natives of the lower country, consisting of the flesh of bullocks of a small breed, fine goats, fowls, and an abundance of yams, the root of the dioscorea**

In those early days Africa was known and famous amongst the then civilized portion of the world, and the Assyrians and Babylonians were among its earliest conquerors, so that about sixty-seven years after the destruction of the Temple, we are told, in Esther 1, that Ahasuerus, the king of Assyria, reigned from India unto Ethiopia, over one hundred and seven and twenty provinces. And since the King of Egypt was considered lord of the people of Ethiopia or Soudan, we read in Isaiah that the ‘king of Assyria led away the Ethiopians captive, young and old, naked and bare footed, to the shame of Egypt.’ Northern Egypt then was the most known portion of the globe, and into it vast immigration took place from time to time, even to the most remote period.

### **Judaistic Emigration into Africa**

The ten tribes of Israel, after they were left to follow the dictates of their own mind, and during the commotion and destructive warfare which ensued, to escape utter extermination, migrated, according to the usage of the times, in vast numbers into various countries, but principally into Northern Africa, as it then presented the safest and easiest route. Once settled, every commotion and intestine war had the most powerful effect of inducing these migratory bands to shift their abode still further,<sup>5</sup>

and so lose all connexion with the other branch of the tribe. As hundreds of years pass on, and generation after generation roll away, they lose a great many of their habits and customs, becoming more amalgamated with the population with which they associate. But when Mohammedanism overspread Northern Africa,<sup>6</sup> destroying by fire and sword all those of another religion, the Israelitish descendants, or the inhabitants occupying the central portion of Africa, passed forward, seeking shelter to the south and west; a part, namely those from the east central, crossing the Binue or Joliba branch of the Niger, descended gradually southward, and became intermingled with the original inhabitants. Protected from incursion on the north by the Binue River, and quietly settled between the Great Niger and Old Kalabar Rivers, they remained in peace, and grew from one generation to another in idolatry, but still leaving tangible proofs in the form of their religion of the Judaistic origin of the inhabitants.



After this slight digression, we will now proceed to investigate more particulars relative to the tribes under consideration. The language, or the little of it that is known, is full of Hebraisms; the constructions of sentences, the verbal significations, the mode of comparison, are all typical of the Hebrew. Like the Hebrew, from a single root of verbs and other elementary parts of speech, substantives, adjectives and adverbs are formed; and of the declension of nouns, the Rev. J. F. Schon, Linguist to the Church Missionary Society, whilst writing of the cases, said there are none in the sense they appear in Latin, and consequently there are no declensions; but there are cases in the sense' in which it is applied in the Hebrew language— namely, that form of nouns to which are appended or suffixed the attributive or possessive pronoun.' Well might a writer in the African Times, when writing on the subject of 'Black, the Original Colour of the White Race,' finish his article with the following addeuda: 'The Isthmus of Suez plays an important part in the history of Africa and the Ethiopian race. Ancient mythology has proved that through it extensive migratory movements took place several thousand years ago from Asia Minor to Africa.

From a little study of the ethnology of the language of Western Africa and the Hebrew tongue, one is involuntarily brought to trace out a similarity in one of them to that of the tribes which, from disobedience to the will of God, were dispersed, and the greatest number of them possibly went to Africa—I mean the 10 st tribes of Israel. If the rites and ceremonies of the religion of the tribes bordering on the banks of the River Niger be closely examined and compared with the religion of the Hebrews at the earliest period— viz., Egbo, Ebo (Heber, Eber) tribe; if the Egbo (Heber, Eber) language, with all its corruptions, be compared with that of the Hebrews, and if the peculiar disposition of the Hebrew tribes, as detailed in Scripture, and that of the Egboes be properly investigated, there will be (2 prime reasons for a serious inquiry whether the Egbo tribe, which is but a branch of the Galla tribe in the interior, is the offspring of the lost tribes of Israel, driven down from Central Africa, and forced to cross the eastern or Binue branch of the Niger, by Mohammedan fanaticism.'



LONG CANOES AND INDIGENOUS IGBO BRIDGE IN AROCHUKWU



south of I'gbo. I inquired particularly after a supposed district or tribe, mentioned by Clarke and some other writers, as I'tshi or Brétshi, but found that this was a misapplication of the term. There is no place of this name, but I'tshi, which means "cut-face," refers to certain individuals who are marked by numerous cuttings on the forehead, which greatly disfigure the countenance. I fell in with one of these I'tshi, who confirmed all this, and told me that this practice prevails chiefly in Isuáma, and that it is confined to the families of the wealthy. As far as I could gather, it is only the males who are thus hideously tatooed, though in I'gbo it is reckoned becoming, and entitles the possessors to respect. The word Brétshi is wrong, Mbrítshi being the correct term, but I'tshi is more frequently employed.

## V. NIGER-DELTA LANGUAGES.

### A. *First Group*: 1. 'Ibo Dialects—

N.B. In Sierra Leone certain natives who have come from the Bight are called 'Ibos. In speaking to some of them respecting this name, I learned that they never had heard it till they came to Sierra Leone. In their own country they seem to have lost their general national name, like the Akus, and know only the names of



their respective districts or countries. I have retained this name for the language, of which I produce specimens, as it is spoken in five of the said districts or countries.

- a. *Isóāma*.—From Akowílo, or George Wilhelm, of Free-town, born in the town Umozúo, where his eldest child was five years old when he was sold by his relatives. He has now been in Sierra Leone thirty years, with many of his countrymen.

Remarks.—*Isóāma* is west of 'Oru and N'kálo.

- b. *'Išiēle*, or *'Išiēl*.—From Ešikányi, or Jacob Egypt, of Wilberforce, born in the town 'Ake, where he had a child three years of age when he was kidnapped and sold to 'Igala, whence he was at once brought to the sea. He has been in Sierra Leone eleven years, with three countrymen.

Remarks.—'Ake is ten days' journey from 'Igala. *'Išiēl* is west of 'Ukéhe, east of 'Igala.

- c. *'Abūdşa*.—From *Anéke*, or Thomas O'Connor, of Waterloo, born in the town Náki, where he was brought up, married two wives, and had a child about twelve years old when he was kidnapped by a treacherous friend and sold into slavery. He has been in Sierra Leone thirty years, with about forty countrymen.

Remarks.—Náki is three days' journey from the large River *Omámbān*, and one day from the smaller River *Akínle*. *'Abūdşa* is west of *'Išiēn*, east of *'Ebēnēbe*, where a different language is spoken. It is also two days' journey from *'Iyi*, with a different language, one day from *'Aki*, three days south-west of *'Igala*. *Anéke* was brought in succession to *'Aro*, *Béndo*, and *'Obāne*.



d. 'Aro'.—From 'Adíbe, or George Rose, of Wilberforce, born in the 'Isóama country, whence he was stolen and brought to 'Aro when a little boy. He was brought up in the village Asága of the 'Aro' country, and lived there till about his twenty-fourth year, when he was sold to the Portuguese in Obáne. He has been in Sierra Leone twenty-four years, and is the only individual speaking the 'Aro' dialect correctly. There is no native of 'Aro' in Sierra Leone.

Remarks.—'Aro' is situate west of 'Itẹ, where a different language is spoken; east of Utúta, with the same language. It also joins to 'Ihe, with the same language; is one day's journey from 'Itu, with a different language; one day from 'Ibíbíá, *i.e.* Kálaba; and four days from 'Isóama, with a different language.

ARO IN ASABA (DEFUNCT ARO OF EZE CHIMA). IHE=IHECHIOWA. OBANE=BONNY

e. Mbófíá.—From 'Okon, or John Thomas, of Waterloo, born in the village 'Epham, where he was brought up, married two wives, and had a child about ten years of age when he was sold on account of adultery and brought to Obáne. He has been in Sierra Leone thirty years, with five other Mbófíá people.

Remarks.—'Epham is one day's journey from the River 'Enyim, which comes from the 'Amōni country, where a different language is spoken, and runs through the 'Abōyim country, close to the sea. Mbófíá is west of 'Ikun, with a different language; east of Bén-da, with a different, yet somewhat allied language; north of Otútu, with a language similar to that of 'Aro; south of 'Ebirebá, with a different, yet somewhat allied language.—The following countries are called 'Ibo in Sierra Leone, whereas this name is not used by any one of these tribes: 1. Mbófíá or Mbófíá, 2. 'Elūgu, 3. 'Ungūa, 4. 'Qzōzu, 5. 'Okūa or Ndóki, 6. 'Isēlu, 7. 'Oluā'sóra, 8. Abādža, 9. Bọm, 10. Múdiọka, 11. 'Isóama, 12. 'Oru, 13. 'Mbōli, 14. Upáni or Obáni, 15. 'Amōni.



<sup>6</sup> Of the ascendancy of Mohammedanism in Central and Western Africa we gather the following from Mr. Kcelle's 'Polyglotta Africana, p. 18: 'The original home of the Fulbe or Phula was in Lilubawa, near Futa Toro, whose inhabitants are called Toronko, and where they have been often molested by Kafirs. To escape this molestation they went gradually towards the east, in the capacity of nomadic shepherds, till they arrived at Hausa. . . After they had been tending their flocks a long time in those forests and grass-fields, without towns, and subsisting simply on the produce of their herds, one of their priests, of the name of Fodie, had an apparition of the Prophet Mohammed, which was destined to form a most signal epoch in the history of Phula, and indeed in the history of the whole of Central and Western Africa. In this apparition Fodie was informed that the whole of that beautiful country around them, with all its populous towns and countless villages, belonged to the believers in the Prophet, to wit the Phula; and that it was Fodie's divine commission, with the help of the faithful, to wrest all those flowery plains, those fruitful hills, and ovely valleys, from the hand of the Kafirs, and then to bring all the Kafirs into subjection to the Islam, and to devote to the sword everyone who refused to believe. Almost beside himself with enthusiasm, and burning with fanaticism, Fodie summoned the believing Fulbe, from every country to the very coast of the Atlantic, to rally around his banner, and to fight with him the battle of the Prophet for the subjugation of all the Kafir tribes of Africa to the religion of God and his Prophet. And, like an electric shock, this message of Fodie pervaded all the lands where Phula were sojourning; and with a magical power converted the shepherds into warriors. Soon Fodie was himself surrounded by an army convinced of its own invincibility, and thirsty for the battle. Thus commenced those extraordinary Phula movements in Central Africa, which, though unrecorded on the pages of our universal histories, are yet written in streams of blood on the pages of the real natural history of our race, in which every human action records itself. On the spot where Fodie had his apparition, he afterwards built the town of Sokoto, now the great centre of Phula power in Africa.'

have been forcibly separated. The existence of the devil, or evil spirits, is also among their beliefs. The greatest and worst of these they call 'KAMALLO,' which is equivalent to 'Satan,' the literal meaning being 'one going about everywhere and in all directions.' In some parts, however, a more impressive and characteristic name is given to it, distinctly pointing it out as Satan the fallen angel; it is called 'IGWIKALLA,' which is derived from the two words, 'Igwik,' signifying '*one who lived above before coming down,*' and 'alla,' the 'ground,' or earth. He is worshipped, and 'persons make inquiries of it if they wish to commit any wicked action, such as murder; bringing presents of cowries and cloth to propitiate this evil being, and render him favourable to their design.' They speak also of lesser evil spirits, the angel of Kamallo, whom they call Mondjo.

addressed the head of the first British expedition into the Aro trading area:

He announced . . . that he was an 'Aro man' . . . and would not take his hat off to any white man, saying in broken English, and with an air of giving satisfaction, as he looked at me, "Me be 'God boy'—me be 'God boy.' You be white man; me be 'God boy.'" <sup>84</sup>



the back of Old Calabar ; the Calabar or Efik and Bonny trade with the Ibo in the interior,—Isoama seems to be the leading or popular dialect of this language ; all Ibo people who meet together in Sierra Leone, whether of the Abo, Elugu, Aro, or Abadja tribe, speak Isoama, and it has been recommended as the best to be used in the translations into the Ibo language : the Rev. J. F. Schön translated his vocabulary in this dialect. The Bonny or Okoloma, and New Calabar language is different from the Ibo, and from the fact that Bonny is principally peopled by Ibo slaves, and their continued intercourse with the Ibo of the interior, it may be inferred that in course of time, the Ibo language will gain advantage over the Bonny, which is very limited on the coast, when books are published in the Ibo language.

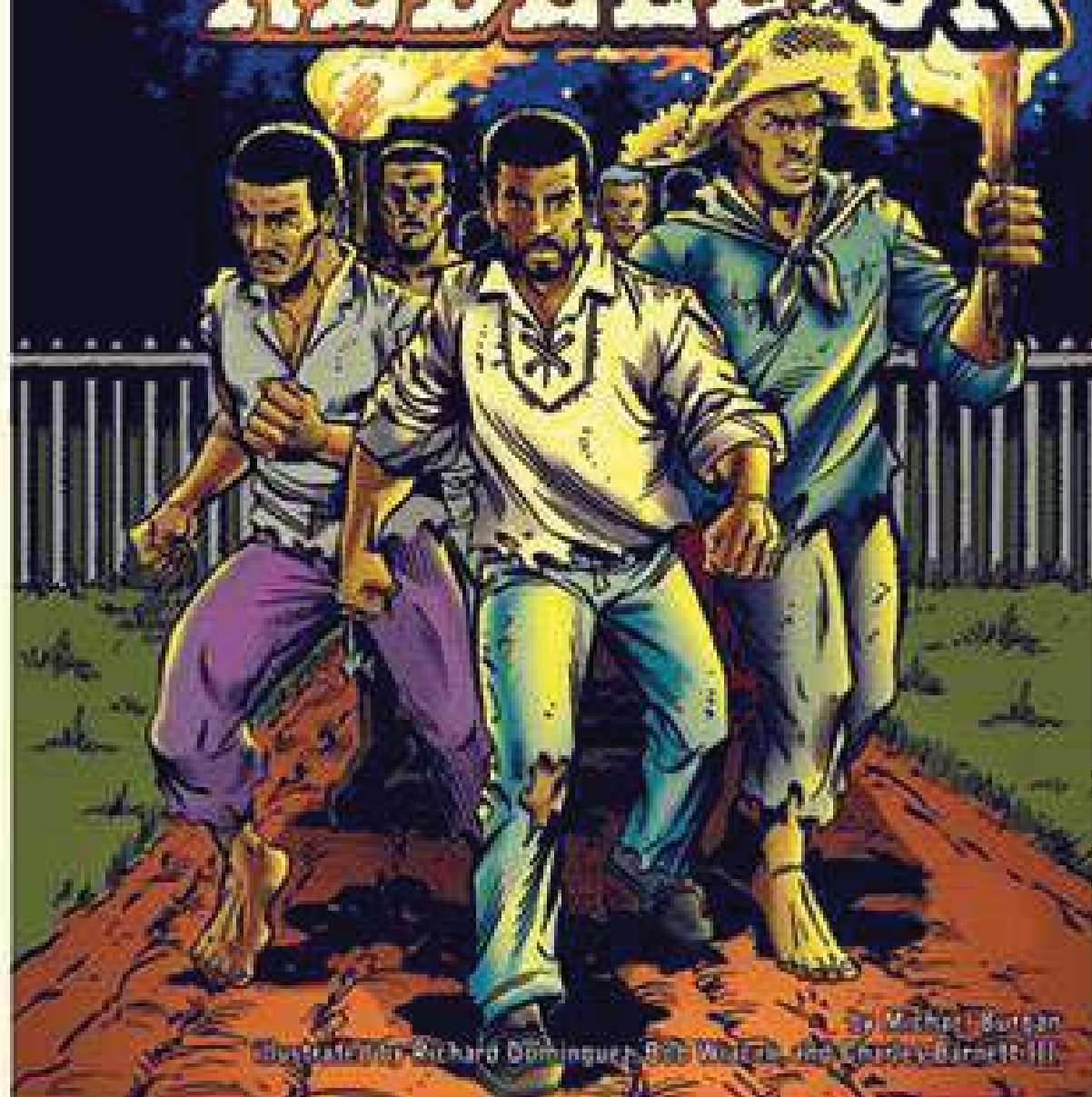
The Rev. J. C. Taylor, Church Missionary agent at Onitsha, witnessed one of these sacrifices, which was made to take away the sins of the people and the land during the past year; and from his account we gather the following: A young virgin of from eighteen to twenty years of age was selected. After several ceremonies had been performed, by which the chiefs and people supposed that the sins of the land were transferred to the poor victim, her hands were tied behind her back, and her legs fastened together with a rope. She was decorated with the young palm leaves, and, with her face to the earth, drawn from the king's house to the river, a distance of two miles. The motley group who accompanied the procession cried as they drew along the unfortunate creature, victimized by the sins of their land, *Aro ye! aro! aro!*—i.e., Wickedness! wickedness! This alarm is given to notify to the passers-by to screen themselves from witnessing the dismal scene. The body was drawn along in a merciless manner, as if the weight of all their wickedness were carried away, whilst the life was still beating in the palpitating bosom of that unfortunate girl.

On reaching the bank of the river, the lifeless body was received in a canoe and paddled with all haste to the deepest part of the river, and then drowned. This they do believing that by that means they could 'atone for the individual sins of those who had broken God's law during the past year.' and thus, exclaims Mr. Taylor, 'these unhappy creatures fared like Jehoiakim of old—they were buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of the city.'





# NAT TURNER'S SLAVE REBELLION



by Michael Burian  
Illustrations: Richard Dominguez, Bill Weller, and Charles Barnett III

one temple to the other. This peculiar mark is distinctive of his rank, the ordinary mark of the Heebo being formed by numerous perpendicular incisions in each temple, as if the operation of cupping had been often performed.'

One distinguishing rank among the Egboes is the *Odogo*, or captain of war, of which there are several grades; the title is distinguished by the individual carrying on his cap a long feather, which signifies that the wearer has killed in war a person of rank. These feathers are either white or red. The highest rank of captain, equal to a general, wears six, and the field-marshal is entitled to display seven. To perpetuate their valour in war, not having any written chronicle to leave their name to posterity, they plant a young bombax whenever they kill an enemy of consequence. As regards the management of warfare, they have peculiar laws. Bishop Crowther gives the following: 'It is a peculiar law among the Ibos, that when the inhabitants of one town are at war with another, and one part or division of the town will not join in the war, they can, without molestation, visit their relatives in the town which is at war with a division of their own, whether men or women, no person touching them.' Strangers living in the country might visit the belligerent towns freely, without apprehension, because they are said not to have a hand in their quarrels. 'Should there be an intermediate town between the two contending towns, neither the one nor the other can step over the intermediate one to attack his enemies without a due notice and permission from the intermediate one, unless they beat their way in a roundabout direction to effect their purpose. When they do come to an open fight in the plain it is said they are fierce. They do not capture to make slaves, but they kill everyone they lay hold of, and take their heads as trophies to their homes, to prevent their dead bodies being taken away by their enemies. Women follow them to their battles, and are employed in removing the dead and wounded out of the way, so that the men do not lose time in doing this, but continue to force their enemies.'

The doctor, or *libia*, is by no means an inferior personage; he is also a priest, and carries himself with great pretensions; is much feared, and exercises a great sway over the people. He pretends



chiefs, are never present. It is convenient for them to retire to a remote spot in the bush, well away from the fray, where they can in quietness (and security) invoke the help of the gods. When there is no further need to pray they return home.

Warriors of renown are respected and honoured, and happy is the man entitled to don the eagle's plumes and the red tail-feathers of the parrot, in token of his prowess in battle. In life he enjoys special privileges, and in death is granted the dignity of a warrior's funeral.

The native guns and ammunition have been noticed in an earlier chapter (p. 128). The former consisted of flint-locks, cap guns and Snider rifles, but cartridges for these last, though always purchasable at certain markets, were not so easy to obtain as the ordinary trade powder and caps. The black powder is packed in barrels, and a dozen of these were sometimes stored in the houses of leading men. A good supply is still available, but nowadays it is used by hunters, and, even more extensively, for ceremonial cannon-firing at second burials.

The chief disturbers of the peace were certain bands of raiders who either acted on their own account or, more frequently, were hired by the men of one town to help them fight against another. Such were the dreaded Abams on the eastern side of the river, and the Ndi-Ekumeku on the western. Both these societies had a large membership and were responsible for a vast amount of havoc in the districts where they operated.

The Ekumeku was, and is still, the most formidable confederation in the country lying between Asaba and Benin. Some account of the society may be given here, inasmuch as war was one of its principal functions, otherwise it would be more rightly described as a secret society. It is rather difficult to decide what the precise meaning of the word Ekumeku is. During the last rising (1904) the members of the confederacy were named the "Silent Ones"; but that rendering assumed that the word was a corruption of Ekwumekwu, i.e. "Don't speak." It has also been interpreted as meaning a "breathing" or "blowing." Probably the idea is based upon that of



The Ezza used these messengers to let the British know what they thought of the administration. Firstly, they asked the messengers to tell the British that the Ezza had heard how the Southern Nigeria Protectorate defeated the Aro and occupied their towns. This, they said, in no way frightened them for, they boasted, the Ezza were more powerful and more warlike than the Aro. Secondly, they asked the emissaries to tell the British that the Ezza people had never been ruled by an alien and would not be ruled by one now. In the whole wide world they recognised only the heavens above and the earth below. Midway between these two great forces the Ezza ruled supreme. Finally, they told the messengers that if the British sent any more emissaries, the Ezza would cut off their heads and return these through the hands of those towns friendly with the administration. In this situation it was impossible to negotiate.

appear in the Appendix. He said the first King Peppel,\* derived his title from selling pepper to European traders, from which the article he dealt in became his own designation, one letter, as is often the case, being substituted for another. The revenue derived of late by Peppel from the increased palm-oil trade, must be little short of, if it does not equal, that made in the palmiest days of the slave-trade. His income from shipping dues and other sources, I have heard reckoned, on sound authority, at from £15,000 to £20,000 a-year. The Bonny people claim an I'gbo descent. Their territory, which is not very extensive, is by them named Ebáne, whence Bonny. By the I'gbos, it is pronounced Obáne, and by New Kalabár Ibáne. The Bonny-town or Grand Bonny-town of the English is correctly Okú-loma, by Brass called Okúloba, for which I heard at Bonny the following derivation. When people first came to this place to build a town, they found it a vast swamp, where bred numbers of a bird re-



<i>Main Divisions<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>Location by Administrative Divisions<sup>2</sup></i>	<i>Approximate number of active adult males (1935-40)</i>
I. Northern or Onitsha Ibo		
(a) Western or Nri-Awka	Onitsha, Awka (ON)	115,400
(b) Eastern or Elugu	Nsukka, Udi, Awgu (ON), Okigwi (OW)	213,000
(c) Onitsha Town	Onitsha (ON)	7,000
	<i>Total</i>	335,400
II. Southern or Owerri Ibo		
(a) Isu-Ama	Okigwi, Orlu, Owerri (OW)	167,600
(b) Oratta-Ikwerri	Owerri (OW), Ahoada (R)	55,000
(c) Ohuhu-Ngwa	Aba, Bende (OW)	62,300
(d) Isu-Item	Bende, Okigwi (OW)	19,500
	<i>Total</i>	304,400
III. Western Ibo		
(a) Northern Ika	Ogwashi Uku, Agbor (B)	33,000
(b) Southern Ika or Kwale	Kwale (W)	19,500
(c) Riverain	Ogwashi Uku (B), Onitsha (ON), Owerri (OW), Ahoada (R)	46,600
	<i>Total</i>	99,100
IV. Eastern or Cross River Ibo		
(a) Ada (Edda)	Afikpo (OG)	20,300
(b) Abam-Ohaffia	Bende, Okigwi (OW)	14,800
(c) Aro	Aro (C)	1,800
	<i>Total</i>	36,900
V. North-Eastern Ibo		

The influence of Benin is marked in the political organization. The various communities were engaged in wars with Benin, to which the majority finally submitted, receiving titles and rulers from Benin. Most have a 'village head' (*Obi*) and a village council (*Onuto*, *Olinzele*) consisting of the *Obi* and a number of senior title-holders, some titles being hereditary but others at the disposal of the *Obi*.

Houses are often of Benin type. The internal and external wall surfaces are sometimes decorated by outline drawings of animals carved on the mud wall. Brass-working imitates Benin styles and among some groups, especially *Agbor*, a carved stave of Benin type is used as the symbol (*ɔfɔ*) of lineage headship and other offices.

Facial marks consist of five or six vertical gashes on the forehead and small scars under the eyes.<sup>3</sup>

TABLE VIII  
(B) SOUTHERN IKA OR KWALE

<i>Name</i>	<i>Tribe (T) Sub-tribe (ST) Group (G) Village Group (VG)</i>	<i>Number of local communities where reported</i>	<i>Approximate number of active adult males (1935-40)</i>	<i>Political Division</i>
1. Umuakasiada	T	4	2,700	Kwale
2. Umunkwata	T or VG	1	1,000	"
3. Abedei	T or VG	1	1,000	"
4. Orogun	ST or VG	7	2,700	"
5. Abbi	ST or VG	1	1,900	"
6. Ama	ST or VG	1	900	"
7. Akoko	T or VG	4	1,700	"
8. Utagba	ST	2	2,800	"
9. Onicha	ST or VG	4	1,500	"
10. Emu	ST or VG	4	1,200	"
11. Ogume	T or VG	5	2,400	"



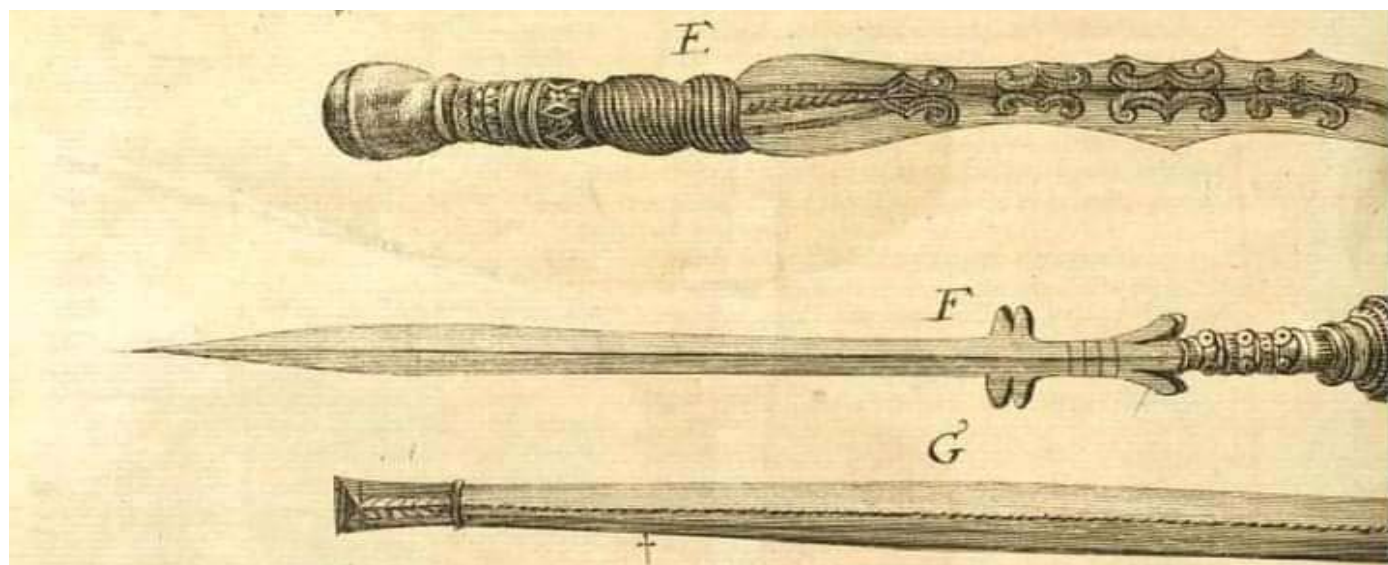
in prices and they may now be obtained at from 25s. per pair. (*Vide* Chap. VIII.)

At one time I followed a regular practice of visiting some of the tiny blacksmiths' shops and saw some clever work done. On one occasion my visit turned out to be one of those apparently unimportant events which often turn the tide of affairs. I was able to show the smith a simple device whereby he was relieved of the task of gripping his tongs throughout the time his metal was heating. We were in a town never previously visited by Europeans and this little incident did much to establish friendly relations with the people. I had strayed from the party and, seeing the smith's shop, I entered and sat down to watch. A crowd gathered round and were greatly interested when we started working together, and the confidence of the folk was won. In return for the professional hint received, the blacksmith there and then took a piece of an old cutlass and forged it into an armlet. He duly chased it with a punched pattern and presented it to me. I then watched him making needles ; fine work with such clumsy tools.

In another shop I saw a smith make all the essential parts of the lock of a gun. He manufactured his own taps and dies from pieces of old cutlasses. In this instance, indeed, the man had made every part of the gun except the barrel, the stock and fittings being so well executed that one could scarcely distinguish the result from an English-made article. I inquired whether he could construct a gun completely, and he replied that he could as far as the forging was concerned, but that he knew no method for tempering the barrel, and therefore it was no use his making that part. In any case it could never be anything but a failure, as the only material at his disposal was the ordinary trade bar-iron.

It is for their skill in repairing guns that the smiths are welcomed in all parts of the country. They are quite capable of converting old flintlocks into cap-guns, and, as long as caps are procurable, men were constantly purchasing the old flintlocks at the factories, and then getting them converted. This work was a source of great profit





Double edged sword with a fluted blade from Arochukwu in the eastern Igbo area, c. 1932 or earlier. Pitt Rivers Museum.



dialects do not coincide with the political divisions of the Provinces, have been widely recognized and used for vernacular writing. 'Owerri Ibo' seems to be the more extensively spoken, and there are considerable differences in phonetic pattern, construction and vocabulary between them.

To provide a Bible in a form which would be understood by speakers of different dialects *Union Ibo* was constructed from material from five areas: **Bonny**, Owerri, Arochuku, Ngwana and Onitsha. Used by Protestant Mission schools, but not by Roman Catholics, *Union Ibo* has not had much success as a literary medium, perhaps on account of its artificial mixing of different sound systems and grammatical constructions.<sup>1</sup>

**Bonny**, which became one of the principal slave markets on the coast, was largely peopled by Ibo. In 1790, according to Adams,<sup>1</sup> 16,000 out of the 20,000 slaves sold there annually were Ibo. The last British slaver sailed from **Bonny** in 1808, though the trade continued till 1841. By 1846 the Rev. Hope Waddell reported that **Bonny** had become a flourishing centre of the palm-oil trade.

The first missions to be established in Ibo country were the C.M.S. at Onitsha in 1856 and Bishop Crowther's at **Bonny** in 1864. Government schools were opened at Onitsha and Owerri in 1906. Meek estimated the total number of professing Christians in Iboland in the 1930s as not less than 600,000.

A trading station was opened at Onitsha in 1856 by Macgregor Laird, by the United African Company in 1879 and by the Royal Niger Company in 1886. The Oil Rivers Protectorate was established at **Bonny** in 1889 and later extended into the interior.

The Aro expeditionary force of 1901-2 brought under control what are now the Bende, Owerri and Aba Divisions, but civil authority was not finally established

ethnic and linguistic term. The people formerly had no name by which they referred to themselves as a whole. The name *Agbisherea*, used by Europeans in the nineteenth century to describe the people and country, appears to have completely died out. Some Ibo call them *Mong*, while the Umani (**Bonny**) Ibo call them *Kwa*. This should not be confused with the similar Efik name for the indigenous groups among whom the Efik settled.<sup>1</sup>

he for this practice, that he acquired the nickname of Readymoney. The other instance is that of the King of Bonny. He was brought up in England, and is one of the first African potentates who has embraced and been trained, in the religion of Jesus Christ. A large amount of pepper has come to England every year from his dominions, so the traders got into the way of styling him King Pepper. The natives being more accustomed to liquid letters, turned it into Pepple. What is the consequence? The king has taken it for his surname; and when he appeared two years ago at St. Paul's Cathedral, in the service held by the Pan-Anglican Synod, the newspapers did not fail to note the fact, and without any thought of depreciation of his high position as an African potentate, gravely announced that in the vast congregation that swelled the limits of the metropolitan cathedral, was to be seen, joining reverently in the service, His Majesty King Pepple! What can more vividly demonstrate to us



number annually sent into slavery, inhabit a country of great extent, and extremely populous, the southern boundary of which may be comprised between Cape Formosa and Old Calabar; and it is very probable that the towns at the mouths of the rivers along the coast, including New Calabar and **Bonny**, were peopled originally from the Heebo country: in fact, Amacree, the King of New Calabar, and Pepple, King of **Bonny**, are both of Heebo descent, as well

**CREEK, OR JO PEOPLE.****117**

The **CREEK**, or Jo people, are a predatory race, and frequently attack boats bound to Gatto; and when weakly manned, they have been known to murder the crew, plunder their cargoes, and burn the boats. They had once the audacity to attempt to surprise in the night a brig under my command, which I had taken to the mouth of the river, for the purpose of allowing the crew to have the advantage of breathing a better atmosphere, hoping, by that means,



### C. *The Aku-Igala Languages.*

N.B. Aku, or rather 'Oku, is a mode of salutation among all the tribes enumerated under No. 1; and hence they are all of them designated in Sierra Leone "Akus," not only by Europeans, but also and chiefly by the native population. It is, consequently, not the historical name by which these numerous tribes are united in one nation; but it is here retained because the historical name is not known at present. It may possibly be discovered, even if lost in the country itself, in one or another of the different appellations by which surrounding nations call the Akus. The Missionaries of the country ought to search after the proper national name of the whole Aku country. For the last few years they have very erroneously made use of the name "Yórūba" in reference to the whole nation, supposing that the Yórūban is the most powerful Aku tribe. But this appellation is liable to far greater objections than that of "Aku," and ought to be forthwith abandoned; for it is, in the first place, unhistorical, having never been used of the whole Aku nation by anybody, except for the last few years conventionally by the Missionaries; secondly, it involves a twofold use of the word "Yórūba," which leads to a confusion of notions, for in one instance the same word has to be understood of a whole, in another, only of part; and, thirdly, the name being thus incorrect, can never be received by the different tribes as a name for their whole nation. If, *e.g.*, you call an Idsébuian or a Yágban a Yórūban, he will always tell you, "Don't call me by that name, I am not a Yórūban;" just, *e.g.*, as the Würtembergians or Bavarians would never suffer themselves to be called Prussians.

1. Aku dialects, or the Aku language as spoken in different districts or countries.

a. 'Otā.—From 'Odó'gu', or John Davis, of Freetown, born in Elógbo, where he was kidnapped by the 'Egbas



That the Ibani, *i.e.* the Bonny and Opobo people, although they trace their origin to an Ibo and can speak that tongue, also claim connection with Brass.

There seems to be some difference of opinion, however, as to their origin. One tradition of the elders is that the Ibani are derived from the Ngwa section of the Ibo race, one Alagba-n-ye, a hunter, having, it is said, come down the Azumini Creek on a hunting expedition, and settled finally with his family on Breaker Island—not the one now in existence, but another that lay more towards the eastern side of the river, beyond Ju Ju Town Creek. The original name given to the first settlement, which was only a small town, was Okuloma (called Okuloba by the Brassmen), so christened after the "okulo" or curlews who inhabited the island in large numbers. Another version has it that the original Ibo settler was one Opobo or Ogulu, who intermarried with a woman from a

---

is one point on which the Bonny people seem to be fairly well agreed, and that is the relationship existing between themselves and the Brassmen. According to this tradition, they have at all events always been on the very closest terms of friendship with and have never made war on each other; and this they attribute to the fact that their gods are in some remote ancestral or spiritual way derived from the same stock—Ogidiga, the Brass, and Ekiba, the Bonny god, having been somehow related in spiritland.

---



The language of the Quaws, says our author, like the character of the people, is harsh and disagreeable. The Ottam and Brass languages are more pleasing, though both are excelled by that of the Appas.

The female names among the Eboes are such as follow: Adda, Beera, Bory, Tilly, Acco, Lolo, Ocoba, Glass, Adeema, Orawarry and Caffey. Adda is very common. The usual names amongst the men are Geeta, Eeka, Howatcha, Adasoba, Agee, **Opobbo**, Hyama and Oeory.

truculent race about whom nothing is known and from whom it was impossible to obtain any information, it is possible among the **Bonny** and Opobo people—the original Ibani—to go back even farther than in the case of the Efik, to about three or four hundred years.

There seems to be some difference of opinion, however, as to their origin. One tradition of the elders is that the Ibani are derived from the Ngwa section of the Ibo race, one Alagba-n-ye, a hunter, having, it is said, come down the Azumini Creek on a hunting expedition, and settled finally with his family on Breaker Island—not the one now in existence, but another that lay more towards the eastern side of the river,

altogether irrespective of tribal divisions and associations.

### KINGS OF **BONNY**

- |                     |                          |
|---------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Alagbariye.      | 6. Edimini.              |
| 2. Opkraindole.     | 7. Kamalu.               |
| 3. Opuamakubu.      | 8. Dappa (Great or Opu). |
| 4. Okpara-Ashimini. | 9. Amakiri.              |
| 5. Ashmini.         | 10. Appinya.             |
| 11. Warri.          |                          |

King Holliday Owsa  
Igbani  
Bupor  
Ipor

Short quartumvirate—  
all princes of the blood.



Besides the Eboes and Brechés, we received at Bonny negroes of several other nations, named Quaws, Appas, Ottams, and Brasses. The Quaws, (or Moscoes of the West Indies) are an ill-disposed people, whom the Eboes regard with great aversion, as they consider them cannibals in their own country; an assumption which their desperate and ferocious looks would seem to warrant. Their skins are blacker than those of the Eboes, and their teeth are sharpened with files, so as to resemble those of a saw. These men were ever the foremost in any mischief or insurrection amongst the slaves, and from time to time many whites fell victims to their fury at Bonny. They are mortal enemies to the Eboes, of whom, such is their masculine superiority, and desperate courage, they would beat three times their own number. The slave ships were always obliged to provide separate rooms for these men between decks, and the captains were careful to have as few of them as possible amongst their cargoes.

UPON HERE, THE IGBOS AS WELL HAVE VERY DARK SKINNED PEOPLE, BUT NOT AS THICKLY MELANIN AS THE JO'S. PERHAPS AND AS WELL AS THEIR UNRELATING LINGUAL WITH ANY NEIGHBOUR OF THE CONTINENTS WEST, MAY HAVE BEEN OFF FROM THE EAST OF THE CONTINENT, WHERE CONCENTRATES HEAVY MELANIN PRESENCE\*



It is noticeable that the Benin people, Iselema, who took refuge in Nembe after the three towns had been ruined appear to have been the stock from which the present race of Brass sprung, and by a process of reasoning the writer maintains that the Brass people have a mixture of Benin blood in their veins, though the primitive races in these places may have differed considerably.

The Obiamas who formed the greater part of Brass were said to have come from Benin; they came to Brass river to fish and afterwards settled there. They lived half way between Ijoh and Brass and were said to be pirates and highway robbers, seizing any of the Brass and Ijoh canoes they might chance to see. On this account the Brass and Ijoh peoples combined together to wage war against them and ultimately drove them from their settlement.

After this, they seemed unwilling to go back to their country (Benin) and begged the king of Brass to give them a place to settle, promising to live in peace and not to molest any more the wayfarers plying on the river, be they Brass or Ijohs.

The king of Brass refused to grant their request; for this reason they came right down to the mouth of the Brass river where they dwelt for some time and afterwards separated forming towns of their own, known as Twon, Okpomo (Big Fishtown), Iwama (Small Fishtown), Beletiana, Akassa, Odiana, Ologbobiri and Ebelema.

HERE EXISTS IN THE EARLIER AVESION, THE QUESTION OF THE JO'S. WHO INFLUENCED THE OTHER AND WHERE EXISTS THIS LATER BRASS PEOPLE.



The fact that two slaves were at the head of affairs seemed to a certain extent to have displeased the other chiefs, and, a disagreement having taken place over some question of domestic economy, Mmadu withdrew the whole of his late master's household eastward across the Andoni flats to the Imo river, where he founded the settlement now known as Opobo

All the Okrika know, or will tell of themselves, is that their forefathers originally came to Okrika from Afam, a place beyond Obu-akpu in the interior Ibo country, which points to, if it does not determine, an Ibo origin; and the fact of their close contact with the Ibani on one side, and to a lesser degree with the New Calabar on the other, at once accounts for their dialect being affiliated to both of these as well as to the Ijo.

~~Of the Ogoni~~, all that my agents and myself were able to find out was that one Ogbe-saku, who was the first founder and king, lived in a town called Joko, which is situated in about the centre of the southern half of the country. By this ruler the latter was divided into four sections or districts, which were named after the principal towns, viz. Joko,

- |                        |          |         |              |  |
|------------------------|----------|---------|--------------|--|
| 1. Pápa                |          |         |              |  |
| 2. Zhídie, his son.    |          |         |              |  |
| 3. Pelíkoli, his son,  |          | the 1st | King Péppel. |  |
| 4. Fumára              | „ „      | „ 2nd   | „ „          |  |
| 5. Opúbu               | „ „      | „ 3rd   | „ „          |  |
| 6. Bríbo               | „ cousin | „ 4th   | „ „          |  |
| 7. Dáppa, son of Opúbu | „        | „ 5th   | „ „          |  |

the majority of the slave-trade market. During the reign of King Opubo Fubara Pepple (1792-1830), himself originally of Ibo descent, as were many of the principal slave traders, life in Bonny was rigorous. In time, commodities such as salt, yams



green spiky fir-like foliage. The Ibo towns are never crowded, each house or little group of houses standing by itself in an independent compound. The open spaces in the town are kept scrupulously clean, being frequently swept with brooms made out of twigs and palm-fronds, which are industriously plied by the boys and youths who keep the town in order. In the vicinity of this settlement, there are dense groves of the oil-palm, and thriving plantations of maize, yams, beans, and colocasia arums.

The Ibos are exceedingly industrious people. They weave grass-cloth, and display a very marked æsthetic taste in the designing of their implements and textile fabrics, and in the interior decoration of their houses, in all of which, and in their social arrangements, they are greatly superior to the degraded coast tribes, who seem to have lost their ancient culture, and have not yet become thoroughly imbued with European civilisation. They are clever smiths, and make a good many implements from the iron which they smelt themselves from the soil, in their primitive forges. The Ibos I look upon as the promising tribe of the delta. It is they, at present, who create the trade; Ijos and Kwos—their neighbours on the south and west—are but middlemen, non-producers. The Ibos are industrious agriculturists, and have fine herds of cattle, goats, and sheep, and quantities of fowls and ducks.

**in what is now known as Aro Chuku District on the western bank of the Cross River. These formed the main priestly and ruling caste. In speaking of them, Chief Gabriel Yellow said :**

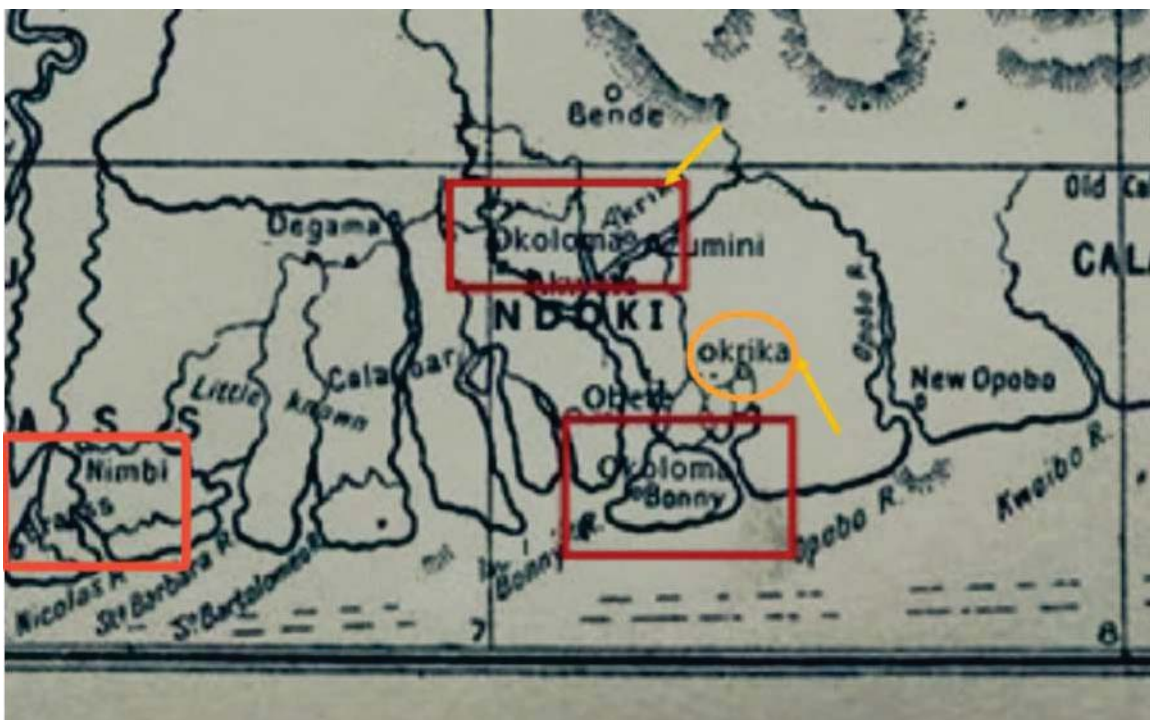
**‘ Before the coming of Europeans, we always looked upon Aro as white-man-like, because from the beginning they were more brainy and cultured ; wiser of speech and moving their bodies more politely. For this reason we obeyed them as Government.’**

EXCERPT FROM A NEIGHBOURING KALABARI CHIEF



signed to five languages previously not reckoned apart, while thirteen more languages were added in which versions published by others have been circulated by the B.F.B.S. We now find that to these thirteen we must add three more, and that **Ijo** and Nimbi (or Brass), in the Niger **Delta**, must be numbered as separate tongues. Thus, with the nine fresh versions already recorded, we have thirteen names to add to 474—making altogether 487 languages, in which our society has helped to produce or circulate the Scriptures. This includes the complete Bible in 129 languages, besides the New Testament in 118 more.

BRASS IS NEMBE. HOW MANY HISTORIANS HAVE EVER VENTURED THIS DEEP -THANKS TO THE MANY UNKNOWN HISTORIANS.



Alburkah for a few hours, and then left to proceed and give notice of our approach to Eboe, about twenty miles distant. They said that **King Obie** was to present us on our arrival with

REACH EBOE.

93

two bullocks, ten goats, and six hundred yams, for which, like all the rest of the kings who have made us presents, he will, I presume, receive double their value in return.

Alihéli related to me a circumstance regarding **King Obí**, which I heard confirmed at Iddá, and at Igbégbe, and which seems quite to free him from any suspicion of being concerned in Mr. Carr's murder. On hearing of this untoward event, Obí immediately sent to the Attá, to acquaint him of it, saying it was very unfortunate and would injure their prospects of trading with white men, and asking what steps ought to be taken about it. The Attá not feeling himself sufficiently powerful to act, sent to Dásaba, requesting his assistance in punishing the murderers. This the latter readily agreed to, and offered to lead

an army to the sea, provided the Attá would furnish

abolishing the slave-trade, which latter I understand he has religiously adhered to. He gave me at different times much information about Bonny, and some specimens of the language, which will appear in the Appendix. He said the first King Peppel,\* derived his title from selling pepper to European traders, from which the article he dealt in became his own designation, one letter, as is often the case, being substituted for another. The revenue derived of late by Peppel from the increased palm-oil trade, must be little short of, if it does not equal, that made in the palmiest days of the slave-trade. His income from shipping dues and other sources, I have heard reckoned, on sound authority, at from £15,000 to £20,000 a-year. The Bonny people claim an Ígbo descent. Their territory, which is not very extensive, is by them named Ebáne, whence Bonny. By the Ígbos, it is pronounced Obáne, and by New Kalabár Ibáne. The Bonny-town or Grand Bonny-town of the English is correctly Okú-loma, by Brass called Okúloba, for which I heard at Bonny the following derivation. When people first came to this place to build a town, they found it a vast swamp, where bred numbers of a bird resembling a curlew, which they called Okúlo. After settlers became numerous these birds deserted the

\* "And then *Pepprell*, the King's brother, made us a discourse, &c." "We had again a long discourse with the King, and *Pepprell* his brother, concerning the rates of our goods and his customs. This *Pepprell* being a sharp blade, and a mighty talking *Black*, &c." See Barbot's *Voyage to New Calabar*, 1699, in Churchill's *Voyages and Travels*, vol. v. p. 559.



spot, whence they said Okúloma, *i.e.*, the curlews fly away. Peppel said that Abó men often called Bonny Osimíni-ku, but I have myself at Abó heard of Okúloma. New Kalabár is in Bonny named Karabári, but is also known as Bom; the language differs somewhat from the Ebáne, but not so much as to prevent people of the one tribe from understanding those of the other. Orú is known at Bonny as Ejó or Esó. Bonny men talk of Abó as E'be and A'be, but sometimes distinguish between Abó and Okurotúmbi in Orú, styling the one Abo'ba or Great Abó, and the other Abo'ntá or Little Abó, so that Lander was not so far wrong about "Little Eboe" after all. Bonny people do not make their own canoes, but purchase them from the Bássa people in Orú. Much palm-oil is bought by Bonny traders in Ndóki, which place is known to them as Mína. Among places mentioned to me by Peppel as known to himself were Ndéli, Úzuzu, Ikpófia, Egáne, and A'buá, these being written according to his pronunciation. Ndóki, Ngwá, and parts of Isuáma and E'lugu, can, he stated, be reached by canoe. He also said that A'ró, to which his people make pilgrimages as well as the I'gbos, is from four to five days' journey from Bonny-town.

66. **MOKO**, A class of Languages which commences north of Romby, and extends inland behind Old Calabar.
67. **EFIK**, Spoken at Old Calabar.
68. **EGBOSHARY**, Spoken to the west of Efik.
69. **ITU**, A Language spoken by a people of this name near to Efik.
70. **EKUNAKUNA**, Spoken on the Cross River.
71. **APPA**, Spoken on the north-eastern parts of the Upper Ibo Country, nigh to Iddah.
72. **IBO**, Spoken over a large portion of the Delta of the Niger, and inland, by a great number of Tribes.
73. **NUMBE**, A Dialect of Ibo, spoken near the mouth of the Nun, and Brass Branches of the Niger.

**NUMBE**, This is the name of the tribe on the mouth of the Brass River and Creek. To this tribe belongs king Boy. *See Lander's Travels.* Kuli, 'Mfalemedu, and Timba are near, and a little way up the river, are Himelah and Ikibri, where Richard Lander was shot. This happened on the 20th of January, 1834, and he died at Fernando Po, on the 2d of February, thirteen days after. *See Laird's and Oldfield's Journal.*

Early in the year 1900 I happened to be paying a visit to the Brass river, and among other topics was discussing trade prospects with some of the chiefs. These, according to James Spiff, a well-informed and intelligent man, did not promise to be favourable, because, he informed me, the producers—in this case **Ijo**—instead of cutting down the nuts from the oil palms, as they ought long since to have done, were busy all over the country making great plays and feasts in honour of the Long Ju-Ju (the Aro Chuku, or god of the Aro) for having prevailed over the smallpox.

“ I happened, says our author, to be at Bonny in 1801, when a grand ceremony took place. King Pepple wishing to honour the memory of his father, who died about ten years before, got his remains disinterred, and invited his friends from all parts to be present on the occasion. All the town was in an uproar for five or six days, playing, feasting and drinking. In every corner were to be seen punchcons of brandy, palm wine and tumboc, of which every one was at liberty to partake without cost, and there was no end to the slaughter of goats, pigs and poultry. A carcass of an elephant having been sent down from the Eboe country, as a present for this grand feast, was left to lie in the corner of a street amongst the mud, for eight or ten days, exposed to the sun, until it became quite putrid. The stinking flesh, when cooked, was, however, considered by the natives as a treat.\* All the women of fashion were invited to the fête. They appeared in their best dresses, with their hair tastefully made up, and their faces and part of their bodies ornamented with paint and adorned with beads. Some of them wore large brass rings† round their legs, of about a pound weight

\* This taste is akin to the fashionable penchant for moor and other game in England, when it is so far decayed that the cook must look after it lest it should move off!

† These rings are worn in several parts of the coast, and particularly at Calabar, and frequently in defiance of their producing sores and lameness.



limit on a slave was that he could not become a king, a new position of political power previously unknown among delta societies before the slave trade. Despite these inequalities, by absorbing large numbers of slaves into the indigenous population, the canoe house system produced an ethnically mixed and cosmopolitan urban population in the delta towns. In most towns, three languages were spoken—Ijo, Efik, and Igbo—along with pidgin English, the trade language used with Europeans.

In the late seventeenth century, Hugh Crow, an English sea captain and slave trader, described life at Bonny, one of the main Niger delta city-states. In the following excerpt from his memoirs, Crow refers to the locals as “Eboes,” although he acknowledges that they are a mixture of local peoples. Crow notes the positive attributes of the Eboes. He then goes on to describe the large numbers of Eboe slaves acquired and how the slaves were procured by the canoes described earlier in this chapter.

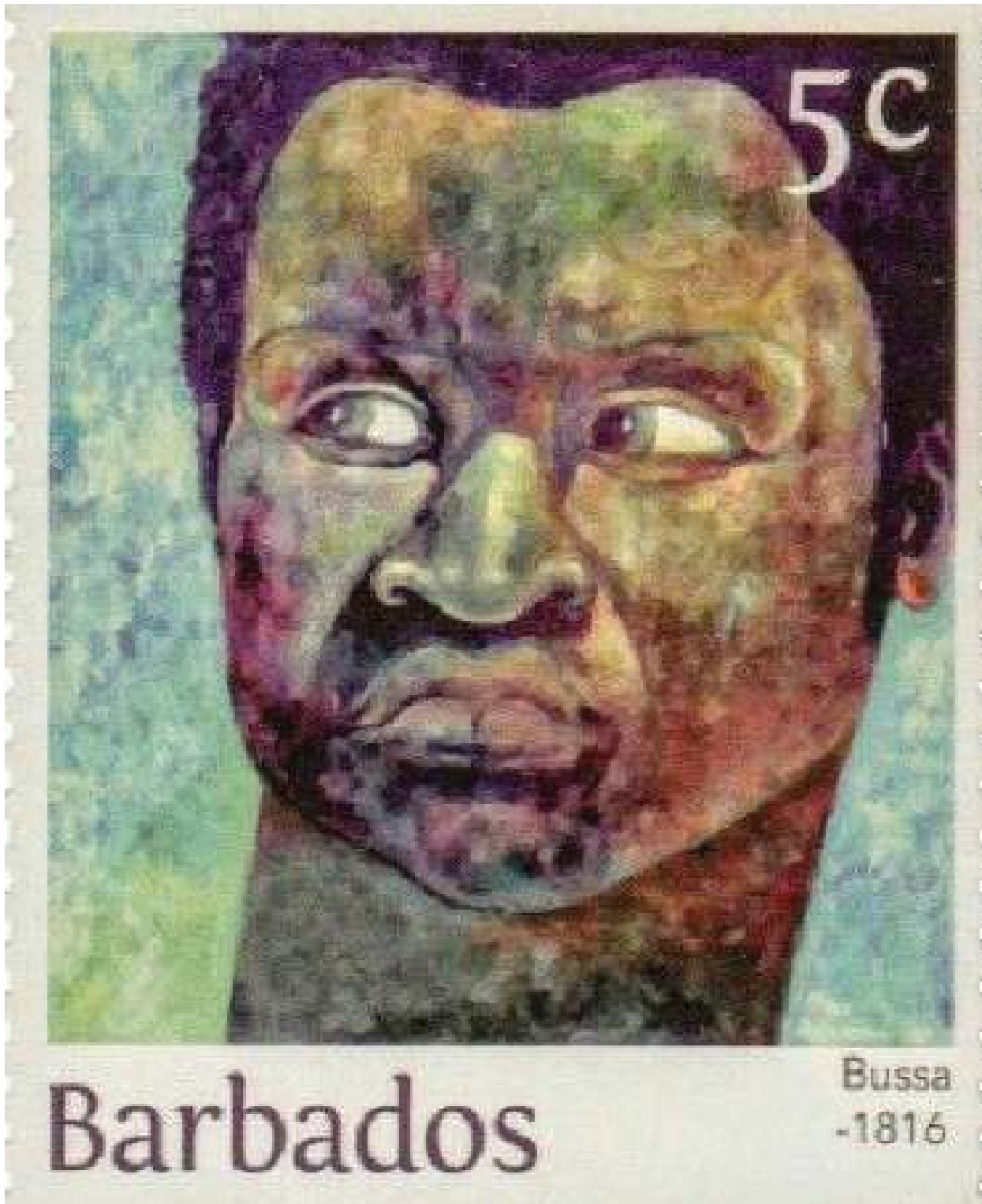
The Eboes have already been spoken of as a superior race, and the inhabitants, generally are a fair dealing people, and much inclined to a friendly traffic with Europeans, who humour their peculiarities. The king of New Calabar and Pepple, king of Bonny, were both of Eboe descent, of which also are the mass of the natives; and the number of the slaves from the Eboe country, which throughout the existence of the British trade were taken from Bonny, amounted to perhaps three-fourths of the whole export. It is calculated that no fewer than 16,000 of these people alone were annually exported from Bonny within the twenty years ending in 1820; so that, including 50,000 taken within the same

#### GENESIS 49

18 I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD.

19 ¶ Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last.





BARBADOS

# OLAUDAH EQUIANO

(AUTO BIO).

\*<NOT COPYRIGHT>\*

**THE  
INTERESTING NARRATIVE  
OF  
THE LIFE  
OF  
OLAUDAH EQUIANO,  
OR  
GUSTAVUS VASSA,  
THE AFRICAN.  
WRITTEN BY HIMSELF.**

**#Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust and not be  
afraid, for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my  
song; he also is become my salvation.  
And in that shall ye say, Praise the Lord, call upon his  
name, declare his doings among the people. Isaiah xii. 2, 4.**

...

Permit me, with the greatest deference and respect, to lay at your feet the following genuine Narrative; the chief design of which is to excite in your august assemblies a sense of compassion for the miseries which the Slave-Trade has entailed on my unfortunate countrymen. By the horrors of that trade was I first torn away from all the tender connexions that were naturally dear to my heart; but these, through the mysterious ways of Providence, I ought to regard as infinitely more than compensated by the introduction I have thence obtained to the knowledge of the Christian religion, and of a nation which, by its liberal sentiments, its humanity, the glorious freedom of its government, and its proficiency in arts and sciences, has exalted the dignity of human nature.

I am sensible I ought to entreat your pardon for addressing to you a work so wholly devoid of literary merit; but, as the production of an unlettered African, who is actuated by the hope of becoming an instrument towards the relief of his suffering countrymen, I trust that such a man, pleading in such a cause, will be acquitted of boldness and presumption.

May the God of heaven inspire your hearts with peculiar benevolence on that important day when the question of Abolition is to be discussed, when thousands, in consequence of your Determination, are to look for Happiness or Misery!

**I am,**

**My Lords and Gentlemen,**

**Your most obedient,**

**And devoted humble servant,**

**Olaudah Equiano,**

**or**

**Gustavus Vassa.**



Union-Street, Mary-le-bone,

March 24, 1789.

LIST of SUBSCRIBERS.

His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

His Royal Highness the Duke of York...

THE LIFE, &c.

## CHAPTER I.

The author's account of his country, and their manners and customs—Administration of justice—Embrenche—Marriage ceremony, and public entertainments—Mode of living—Dress—Manufactures Buildings—Commerce—Agriculture—War and religion—Superstition of the natives—Funeral ceremonies of the priests or magicians—Curious mode of discovering poison—Some hints concerning the origin of the author's countrymen, with the opinions of different writers on that subject.

I believe it is difficult for those who publish their own memoirs to escape the imputation of vanity; nor is this the only disadvantage under which they labour: it is also their misfortune, that what is uncommon is rarely, if ever, believed, and what is obvious we are apt to turn from with disgust, and to charge the writer with impertinence. People generally think those memoirs only worthy to be read or remembered which abound in great or striking events, those, in short, which in a high degree excite either admiration or pity: all others they consign to contempt and oblivion. It is therefore, I confess, not a little hazardous in a private and obscure individual, and a stranger too, thus to solicit the indulgent attention of the public; especially when I own I offer here the history of neither a saint, a hero, nor a tyrant. I believe there are few events in my life, which have not happened to many: it is true the incidents of it are numerous; and, did I consider myself an European, I might say my sufferings were great: but when I compare my lot with that of most of my countrymen, I regard myself as a particular favourite of Heaven, and acknowledge the mercies of Providence in every occurrence of my life. If then the following narrative does not appear sufficiently interesting to engage general attention, let my motive be some excuse for its publication. I am not so foolishly vain as to expect from it either immortality or literary reputation. If it affords any satisfaction to my numerous friends, at whose request it has been written, or in the smallest degree promotes the interests of humanity, the ends for which it was undertaken will be fully attained, and every wish of my heart gratified. Let it therefore be remembered, that, in wishing to avoid censure, I do not aspire to praise.

That part of Africa, known by the name of Guinea, to which the trade for slaves is carried on, extends along the coast above 3400 miles, from the Senegal to Angola, and includes a variety of kingdoms. Of these the most considerable is the kingdom of Benen, both as to extent and wealth, the richness and cultivation of the soil, the power of its king, and the number and warlike disposition of the inhabitants. It is situated nearly under the line, and

extends along the coast about 170 miles, but runs back into the interior part of Africa to a distance hitherto I believe unexplored by any traveller; and seems only terminated at length by the empire of Abyssinia, near 1500 miles from its beginning. This kingdom is divided into many provinces or districts: in one of the most remote and fertile of which, called Eboe, I was born, in the year 1745, in a charming fruitful vale, named Essaka. The distance of this province from the capital of Benin and the sea coast must be very considerable; for I had never heard of white men or Europeans, nor of the sea: and our subjection to the king of Benin was little more than nominal; for every transaction of the government, as far as my slender observation extended, was conducted by the chiefs or elders of the place. The manners and government of a people who have little commerce with other countries are generally very simple; and the history of what passes in one family or village may serve as a specimen of a nation. My father was one of those elders or chiefs I have spoken of, and was styled Embrenche; a term, as I remember, importing the highest distinction, and signifying in our language a mark of grandeur. This mark is conferred on the person entitled to it, by cutting the skin across at the top of the forehead, and drawing it down to the eye-brows; and while it is in this situation applying a warm hand, and rubbing it until it shrinks up into a thick weal across the lower part of the forehead. Most of the judges and senators were thus marked; my father had long born it: I had seen it conferred on one of my brothers, and I was also destined to receive it by my parents. Those Embrenche, or chief men, decided disputes and punished crimes; for which purpose they always assembled together. The proceedings were generally short; and in most cases the law of retaliation prevailed. I remember a man was brought before my father, and the other judges, for kidnapping a boy; and, although he was the son of a chief or senator, he was condemned to make recompense by a man or woman slave. Adultery, however, was sometimes punished with slavery or death; a punishment which I believe is inflicted on it throughout most of the nations of Africa[A]: so sacred among them is the honour of the marriage bed, and so jealous are they of the fidelity of their wives. Of this I recollect an instance:—a woman was convicted before the judges of adultery, and delivered over, as the custom was, to her husband to be punished. Accordingly he determined to put her to death: but it being found, just before her execution, that she had an infant at her breast; and no woman being prevailed on to perform the part of a nurse, she was spared on account of the child. The men, however, do not preserve the same constancy to their wives, which they expect from them; for they indulge in a plurality, though seldom in more than two. Their mode of marriage is thus:—both parties are usually betrothed when young by their parents, (though I have known the males to betroth themselves). On this occasion a feast is prepared, and the bride and bridegroom stand up in the midst of all their friends, who are assembled for the purpose, while he declares she is thenceforth to be looked upon as his wife, and that no other person is to pay any addresses to her. This is also immediately proclaimed in the vicinity, on which the bride retires from the assembly. Some time after she is brought home to her husband, and then another feast is made, to which the relations of both parties are invited: her parents then deliver her to the bridegroom, accompanied with a number of blessings, and at the same time they tie round her waist a cotton string of the thickness of a goose-quill, which none but married women are permitted to wear: she is now considered as completely his wife; and at this time the dowry is given to the new married pair, which generally consists of portions of land, slaves, and cattle, household goods, and implements of husbandry. These are offered by the friends of both parties; besides which the parents of the bridegroom present gifts to those of the bride, whose property she is looked upon before marriage; but after it she is esteemed the sole property of her husband. The ceremony being now ended the festival begins, which is celebrated with bonfires, and loud acclamations of joy, accompanied with music and dancing.

We are almost a nation of dancers, musicians, and poets. Thus every great event, such as a triumphant return from battle, or other cause of public rejoicing is celebrated in public dances, which are accompanied with songs and music suited to the occasion. The assembly is separated into four divisions, which dance either apart or in succession, and each with a character peculiar to itself. The first division contains the married men, who in their dances frequently exhibit feats of arms, and the representation of a battle. To these succeed the married women, who dance in the second division. The young men occupy the third; and the maidens the fourth. Each represents some interesting scene of real life, such as a great achievement, domestic employment, a pathetic story, or some rural sport; and as the subject is generally founded on some recent event, it is therefore ever new. This gives our dances a spirit and variety which I have scarcely seen elsewhere[B]. We have many musical instruments, particularly drums of different kinds, a piece of music which resembles a guitar, and another much like a stickado. These last are chiefly used by betrothed virgins, who play on them on all grand festivals.

As our manners are simple, our luxuries are few. The dress of both sexes is nearly the same. It generally consists of a long piece of callico, or muslin, wrapped loosely round the body, somewhat in the form of a highland plaid. This is usually dyed blue, which is our favourite colour. It is extracted from a berry, and is brighter and richer than any I have seen in Europe. Besides this, our women of distinction wear golden ornaments; which they dispose with some profusion on their arms and legs. When our women are not employed with the men in tillage, their usual occupation is spinning and weaving cotton, which they afterwards dye, and make it into garments. They also manufacture earthen vessels, of which we have many kinds. Among the rest tobacco pipes, made after the same fashion, and used in the same manner, as those in Turkey[C].

Our manner of living is entirely plain; for as yet the natives are unacquainted with those refinements in cookery which debauch the taste: bullocks, goats, and poultry, supply the greatest part of their food. These constitute likewise the principal wealth of the country, and the chief articles of its commerce. The flesh is usually stewed in a pan; to make it savoury we sometimes use also pepper, and other spices, and we have salt made of wood ashes. Our vegetables are mostly plantains, eadas, yams, beans, and Indian corn. The head of the family usually eats alone; his wives and slaves have also their separate tables. Before we taste food we always wash our hands: indeed our cleanliness on all occasions is extreme; but on this it is an indispensable ceremony. After washing, libation is made, by pouring out a small portion of the food, in a certain place, for the spirits of departed relations, which the natives suppose to preside over their conduct, and guard them from evil. They are totally unacquainted with strong or spirituous liquours; and their principal beverage is palm wine. This is gotten from a tree of that name by tapping it at the top, and fastening a large gourd to it; and sometimes one tree will yield three or four gallons in a night. When just drawn it is of a most delicious sweetness; but in a few days it acquires a tartish and more spirituous flavour: though I never saw any one intoxicated by it. The same tree also produces nuts and oil. Our principal luxury is in perfumes; one sort of these is an odoriferous wood of delicious fragrance: the other a kind of earth; a small portion of which thrown into the fire diffuses a most powerful odour[D]. We beat this wood into powder, and mix it with palm oil; with which both men and women perfume themselves.

In our buildings we study convenience rather than ornament. Each master of a family has a large square piece of ground, surrounded with a moat or fence, or enclosed with a wall made of red earth tempered; which, when dry, is as hard as brick. Within this are his houses to accommodate his family and slaves; which, if numerous, frequently present the appearance of a village. In the middle stands the principal building, appropriated to the sole use of the master, and consisting of two apartments; in one of which he sits in the day with his family, the other is left apart for the reception of his friends. He has besides these a distinct apartment in which he sleeps, together with his male children. On each side are the apartments of his wives, who have also their separate day and night houses. The habitations of the slaves and their families are distributed throughout the rest of the enclosure. These houses never exceed one story in height: they are always built of wood, or stakes driven into the ground, crossed with wattles, and neatly plastered within, and without. The roof is thatched with reeds. Our day-houses are left open at the sides; but those in which we sleep are always covered, and plastered in the inside, with a composition mixed with cow-dung, to keep off the different insects, which annoy us during the night. The walls and floors also of these are generally covered with mats. Our beds consist of a platform, raised three or four feet from the ground, on which are laid skins, and different parts of a spungy tree called plaintain. Our covering is calico or muslin, the same as our dress. The usual seats are a few logs of wood; but we have benches, which are generally perfumed, to accommodate strangers: these compose the greater part of our household furniture. Houses so constructed and furnished require but little skill to erect them. Every man is a sufficient architect for the purpose. The whole neighbourhood afford their unanimous assistance in building them and in return receive, and expect no other recompense than a feast.

As we live in a country where nature is prodigal of her favours, our wants are few and easily supplied; of course we have few manufactures. They consist for the most part of calicoes, earthen ware, ornaments, and instruments of war and husbandry. But these make no part of our commerce, the principal articles of which, as I have observed, are provisions. In such a state money is of little use; however we have some small pieces of coin, if I may call them such. They are made something like an anchor; but I do not remember either their value or denomination. We have also markets, at which I have been frequently with my mother. These are sometimes visited by stout mahogany-coloured men from the south west of us: we call them Oye-Eboe, which term signifies red men living at a distance. They generally bring us fire-arms, gunpowder, hats, beads, and dried fish. The last we esteemed a great rarity, as our waters were only brooks and springs. These articles they barter with us for odoriferous woods and earth, and our salt of wood ashes. They always carry slaves through our land; but the strictest account is exacted of their manner of procuring them before they are suffered to pass. Sometimes indeed we sold slaves to them, but they were only prisoners of war, or such among us as had been convicted of kidnapping, or adultery, and some other crimes, which we esteemed heinous. This practice of kidnapping induces me to think, that, notwithstanding all our strictness, their principal business among us was to trepan our people. I remember too they carried great sacks along with them, which not long after I had an opportunity of fatally seeing applied to that infamous purpose.

Our land is uncommonly rich and fruitful, and produces all kinds of vegetables in great abundance. We have plenty of Indian corn, and vast quantities of cotton and tobacco. Our pine apples grow without culture; they are about the size of the largest sugar-loaf, and finely flavoured. We have also spices of different kinds, particularly pepper; and a variety of



delicious fruits which I have never seen in Europe; together with gums of various kinds, and honey in abundance. All our industry is exerted to improve those blessings of nature. Agriculture is our chief employment; and every one, even the children and women, are engaged in it. Thus we are all habituated to labour from our earliest years. Every one contributes something to the common stock; and as we are unacquainted with idleness, we have no beggars. The benefits of such a mode of living are obvious. The West India planters prefer the slaves of Benin or Eboe to those of any other part of Guinea, for their hardiness, intelligence, integrity, and zeal. Those benefits are felt by us in the general healthiness of the people, and in their vigour and activity; I might have added too in their comeliness. Deformity is indeed unknown amongst us, I mean that of shape. Numbers of the natives of Eboe now in London might be brought in support of this assertion: for, in regard to complexion, ideas of beauty are wholly relative. I remember while in Africa to have seen three negro children, who were tawny, and another quite white, who were universally regarded by myself, and the natives in general, as far as related to their complexions, as deformed. Our women too were in my eyes at least uncommonly graceful, alert, and modest to a degree of bashfulness; nor do I remember to have ever heard of an instance of incontinence amongst them before marriage. They are also remarkably cheerful. Indeed cheerfulness and affability are two of the leading characteristics of our nation.

Our tillage is exercised in a large plain or common, some hours walk from our dwellings, and all the neighbours resort thither in a body. They use no beasts of husbandry; and their only instruments are hoes, axes, shovels, and beaks, or pointed iron to dig with. Sometimes we are visited by locusts, which come in large clouds, so as to darken the air, and destroy our harvest. This however happens rarely, but when it does, a famine is produced by it. I remember an instance or two wherein this happened. This common is often the theatre of war; and therefore when our people go out to till their land, they not only go in a body, but generally take their arms with them for fear of a surprise; and when they apprehend an invasion they guard the avenues to their dwellings, by driving sticks into the ground, which are so sharp at one end as to pierce the foot, and are generally dipt in poison. From what I can recollect of these battles, they appear to have been irruptions of one little state or district on the other, to obtain prisoners or booty. Perhaps they were incited to this by those traders who brought the European goods I mentioned amongst us. Such a mode of obtaining slaves in Africa is common; and I believe more are procured this way, and by kidnapping, than any other[E]. When a trader wants slaves, he applies to a chief for them, and tempts him with his wares. It is not extraordinary, if on this occasion he yields to the temptation with as little firmness, and accepts the price of his fellow creatures liberty with as little reluctance as the enlightened merchant. Accordingly he falls on his neighbours, and a desperate battle ensues. If he prevails and takes prisoners, he gratifies his avarice by selling them; but, if his party be vanquished, and he falls into the hands of the enemy, he is put to death: for, as he has been known to foment their quarrels, it is thought dangerous to let him survive, and no ransom can save him, though all other prisoners may be redeemed. We have fire-arms, bows and arrows, broad two-edged swords and javelins: we have shields also which cover a man from head to foot. All are taught the use of these weapons; even our women are warriors, and march boldly out to fight along with the men. Our whole district is a kind of militia: on a certain signal given, such as the firing of a gun at night, they all rise in arms and rush upon their enemy. It is perhaps something remarkable, that when our people march to the field a red flag or banner is borne before them. I was once a witness to a battle in our common. We had been all at work in it one day as usual, when our people were suddenly attacked. I climbed a tree at some distance, from which I beheld the fight. There were many women as well as men on both sides; among others my mother was there, and

armed with a broad sword. After fighting for a considerable time with great fury, and after many had been killed our people obtained the victory, and took their enemy's Chief prisoner. He was carried off in great triumph, and, though he offered a large ransom for his life, he was put to death. A virgin of note among our enemies had been slain in the battle, and her arm was exposed in our market-place, where our trophies were always exhibited. The spoils were divided according to the merit of the warriors. Those prisoners which were not sold or redeemed we kept as slaves: but how different was their condition from that of the slaves in the West Indies! With us they do no more work than other members of the community, even their masters; their food, clothing and lodging were nearly the same as theirs, (except that they were not permitted to eat with those who were free-born); and there was scarce any other difference between them, than a superior degree of importance which the head of a family possesses in our state, and that authority which, as such, he exercises over every part of his household. Some of these slaves have even slaves under them as their own property, and for their own use.

As to religion, the natives believe that there is one Creator of all things, and that he lives in the sun, and is girted round with a belt that he may never eat or drink; but, according to some, he smokes a pipe, which is our own favourite luxury. They believe he governs events, especially our deaths or captivity; but, as for the doctrine of eternity, I do not remember to have ever heard of it: some however believe in the transmigration of souls in a certain degree. Those spirits, which are not transmigrated, such as our dear friends or relations, they believe always attend them, and guard them from the bad spirits or their foes. For this reason they always before eating, as I have observed, put some small portion of the meat, and pour some of their drink, on the ground for them; and they often make oblations of the blood of beasts or fowls at their graves. I was very fond of my mother, and almost constantly with her. When she went to make these oblations at her mother's tomb, which was a kind of small solitary thatched house, I sometimes attended her. There she made her libations, and spent most of the night in cries and lamentations. I have been often extremely terrified on these occasions. The loneliness of the place, the darkness of the night, and the ceremony of libation, naturally awful and gloomy, were heightened by my mother's lamentations; and these, concurring with the cries of doleful birds, by which these places were frequented, gave an inexpressible terror to the scene.

We compute the year from the day on which the sun crosses the line, and on its setting that evening there is a general shout throughout the land; at least I can speak from my own knowledge throughout our vicinity. The people at the same time make a great noise with rattles, not unlike the basket rattles used by children here, though much larger, and hold up their hands to heaven for a blessing. It is then the greatest offerings are made; and those children whom our wise men foretel will be fortunate are then presented to different people. I remember many used to come to see me, and I was carried about to others for that purpose. They have many offerings, particularly at full moons; generally two at harvest before the fruits are taken out of the ground: and when any young animals are killed, sometimes they offer up part of them as a sacrifice. These offerings, when made by one of the heads of a family, serve for the whole. I remember we often had them at my father's and my uncle's, and their families have been present. Some of our offerings are eaten with bitter herbs. We had a saying among us to any one of a cross temper, 'That if they were to be eaten, they should be eaten with bitter herbs.'

We practised circumcision like the Jews, and made offerings and feasts on that occasion in the same manner as they did. Like them also, our children were named from some event, some circumstance, or fancied foreboding at the time of their birth. I was named Olaudah, which, in our language, signifies vicissitude or fortune also, one favoured, and having a loud voice and well spoken. I remember we never polluted the name of the object of our adoration; on the contrary, it was always mentioned with the greatest reverence; and we were totally unacquainted with swearing, and all those terms of abuse and reproach which find their way so readily and copiously into the languages of more civilized people. The only expressions of that kind I remember were 'May you rot, or may you swell, or may a beast take you.'

I have before remarked that the natives of this part of Africa are extremely cleanly. This necessary habit of decency was with us a part of religion, and therefore we had many purifications and washings; indeed almost as many, and used on the same occasions, if my recollection does not fail me, as the Jews. Those that touched the dead at any time were obliged to wash and purify themselves before they could enter a dwelling-house. Every woman too, at certain times, was forbidden to come into a dwelling-house, or touch any person, or any thing we ate. I was so fond of my mother I could not keep from her, or avoid touching her at some of those periods, in consequence of which I was obliged to be kept out with her, in a little house made for that purpose, till offering was made, and then we were purified.

Though we had no places of public worship, we had priests and magicians, or wise men. I do not remember whether they had different offices, or whether they were united in the same persons, but they were held in great reverence by the people. They calculated our time, and foretold events, as their name imported, for we called them Ah-affoe-way-cah, which signifies calculators or yearly men, our year being called Ah-affoe. They wore their beards, and when they died they were succeeded by their sons. Most of their implements and things of value were interred along with them. Pipes and tobacco were also put into the grave with the corpse, which was always perfumed and ornamented, and animals were offered in sacrifice to them. None accompanied their funerals but those of the same profession or tribe. These buried them after sunset, and always returned from the grave by a different way from that which they went.

These magicians were also our doctors or physicians. They practised bleeding by cupping; and were very successful in healing wounds and expelling poisons. They had likewise some extraordinary method of discovering jealousy, theft, and poisoning; the success of which no doubt they derived from their unbounded influence over the credulity and superstition of the people. I do not remember what those methods were, except that as to poisoning: I recollect an instance or two, which I hope it will not be deemed impertinent here to insert, as it may serve as a kind of specimen of the rest, and is still used by the negroes in the West Indies. A virgin had been poisoned, but it was not known by whom: the doctors ordered the corpse to be taken up by some persons, and carried to the grave. As soon as the bearers had raised it on their shoulders, they seemed seized with some[F] sudden impulse, and ran to and fro unable to stop themselves. At last, after having passed through a number of thorns and prickly bushes unhurt, the corpse fell from them close to a house, and defaced it in the fall; and, the owner being taken up, he immediately confessed the poisoning[G].

The natives are extremely cautious about poison. When they buy any eatable the seller kisses it all round before the buyer, to shew him it is not poisoned; and the same is done when any meat or drink is presented, particularly to a stranger. We have serpents of different kinds, some of which are esteemed ominous when they appear in our houses, and these we never molest. I remember two of those ominous snakes, each of which was as thick as the calf of a man's leg, and in colour resembling a dolphin in the water, crept at different times into my mother's night-house, where I always lay with her, and coiled themselves into folds, and each time they crowed like a cock. I was desired by some of our wise men to touch these, that I might be interested in the good omens, which I did, for they were quite harmless, and would tamely suffer themselves to be handled; and then they were put into a large open earthen pan, and set on one side of the highway. Some of our snakes, however, were poisonous: one of them crossed the road one day when I was standing on it, and passed between my feet without offering to touch me, to the great surprise of many who saw it; and these incidents were accounted by the wise men, and therefore by my mother and the rest of the people, as remarkable omens in my favour.

Such is the imperfect sketch my memory has furnished me with of the manners and customs of a people among whom I first drew my breath. And here I cannot forbear suggesting what has long struck me very forcibly, namely, the strong analogy which even by this sketch, imperfect as it is, appears to prevail in the manners and customs of my countrymen and those of the Jews, before they reached the Land of Promise, and particularly the patriarchs while they were yet in that pastoral state which is described in Genesis—an analogy, which alone would induce me to think that the one people had sprung from the other. Indeed this is the opinion of Dr. Gill, who, in his commentary on Genesis, very ably deduces the pedigree of the Africans from Afer and Afra, the descendants of Abraham by Keturah his wife and concubine (for both these titles are applied to her). It is also conformable to the sentiments of Dr. John Clarke, formerly Dean of Sarum, in his Truth of the Christian Religion: both these authors concur in ascribing to us this original. The reasonings of these gentlemen are still further confirmed by the scripture chronology; and if any further corroboration were required, this resemblance in so many respects is a strong evidence in support of the opinion. Like the Israelites in their primitive state, our government was conducted by our chiefs or judges, our wise men and elders; and the head of a family with us enjoyed a similar authority over his household with that which is ascribed to Abraham and the other patriarchs. The law of retaliation obtained almost universally with us as with them: and even their religion appeared to have shed upon us a ray of its glory, though broken and spent in its passage, or eclipsed by the cloud with which time, tradition, and ignorance might have enveloped it; for we had our circumcision (a rule I believe peculiar to that people:) we had also our sacrifices and burnt-offerings, our washings and purifications, on the same occasions as they had.

As to the difference of colour between the Eboan Africans and the modern Jews, I shall not presume to account for it. It is a subject which has engaged the pens of men of both genius and learning, and is far above my strength. The most able and Reverend Mr. T. Clarkson, however, in his much admired Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, has ascertained the cause, in a manner that at once solves every objection on that account, and, on my mind at least, has produced the fullest conviction. I shall therefore refer to that performance for the theory[H], contenting myself with extracting a fact as related by Dr.



Mitchel[I]. "The Spaniards, who have inhabited America, under the torrid zone, for any time, are become as dark coloured as our native Indians of Virginia; of which I myself have been a witness." There is also another instance[J] of a Portuguese settlement at Mitomba, a river in Sierra Leona; where the inhabitants are bred from a mixture of the first Portuguese discoverers with the natives, and are now become in their complexion, and in the woolly quality of their hair, perfect negroes, retaining however a smattering of the Portuguese language.

These instances, and a great many more which might be adduced, while they shew how the complexions of the same persons vary in different climates, it is hoped may tend also to remove the prejudice that some conceive against the natives of Africa on account of their colour. Surely the minds of the Spaniards did not change with their complexions! Are there not causes enough to which the apparent inferiority of an African may be ascribed, without limiting the goodness of God, and supposing he forbore to stamp understanding on certainly his own image, because "carved in ebony." Might it not naturally be ascribed to their situation? When they come among Europeans, they are ignorant of their language, religion, manners, and customs. Are any pains taken to teach them these? Are they treated as men? Does not slavery itself depress the mind, and extinguish all its fire and every noble sentiment? But, above all, what advantages do not a refined people possess over those who are rude and uncultivated. Let the polished and haughty European recollect that his ancestors were once, like the Africans, uncivilized, and even barbarous. Did Nature make them inferior to their sons? and should they too have been made slaves? Every rational mind answers, No. Let such reflections as these melt the pride of their superiority into sympathy for the wants and miseries of their sable brethren, and compel them to acknowledge, that understanding is not confined to feature or colour. If, when they look round the world, they feel exultation, let it be tempered with benevolence to others, and gratitude to God, "who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth[K]; and whose wisdom is not our wisdom, neither are our ways his ways."

## CHAPTER. II.

The author's birth and parentage—His being kidnapped with his sister—Their separation—Surprise at meeting again—Are finally separated—Account of the different places and incidents the author met with till his arrival on the coast—The effect the sight of a slave ship had on him—He sails for the West Indies—Horrors of a slave ship—Arrives at Barbadoes, where the cargo is sold and dispersed.

I hope the reader will not think I have trespassed on his patience in introducing myself to him with some account of the manners and customs of my country. They had been implanted in me with great care, and made an impression on my mind, which time could not erase, and which all the adversity and variety of fortune I have since experienced served only to rivet and record; for, whether the love of one's country be real or imaginary, or a lesson of reason, or an instinct of nature, I still look back with pleasure on the first scenes of my life, though that pleasure has been for the most part mingled with sorrow.

I have already acquainted the reader with the time and place of my birth. My father, besides many slaves, had a numerous family, of which seven lived to grow up, including myself and a sister, who was the only daughter. As I was the youngest of the sons, I became, of course, the greatest favourite with my mother, and was always with her; and she used to take particular pains to form my mind. I was trained up from my earliest years in the art of war; my daily exercise was shooting and throwing javelins; and my mother adorned me with emblems, after the manner of our greatest warriors. In this way I grew up till I was turned the age of eleven, when an end was put to my happiness in the following manner:—Generally when the grown people in the neighbourhood were gone far in the fields to labour, the children assembled together in some of the neighbours' premises to play; and commonly some of us used to get up a tree to look out for any assailant, or kidnapper, that might come upon us; for they sometimes took those opportunities of our parents' absence to attack and carry off as many as they could seize. One day, as I was watching at the top of a tree in our yard, I saw one of those people come into the yard of our next neighbour but one, to kidnap, there being many stout young people in it. Immediately on this I gave the alarm of the rogue, and he was surrounded by the stoutest of them, who entangled him with cords, so that he could not escape till some of the grown people came and secured him. But alas! ere long it was my fate to be thus attacked, and to be carried off, when none of the grown people were nigh. One day, when all our people were gone out to their works as usual, and only I and my dear sister were left to mind the house, two men and a woman got over our walls, and in a moment seized us both, and, without giving us time to cry out, or make resistance, they stopped our mouths, and ran off with us into the nearest wood. Here they tied our hands, and continued to carry us as far as they could, till night came on, when we reached a small house, where the robbers halted for refreshment, and spent the night. We were then unbound, but were unable to take any food; and, being quite overpowered by fatigue and grief, our only relief was some sleep, which allayed our misfortune for a short time. The next morning we left the house, and continued travelling all the day. For a long time we had kept the woods, but at last we came into a road which I believed I knew. I had now some hopes of being delivered; for we had advanced but a little way before I discovered some people at a distance, on which I began to cry out for their assistance: but my cries had no other effect than to make them tie me faster and stop my mouth, and then they put me into a large sack. They also stopped my sister's mouth, and tied her hands; and in this manner we proceeded till we were out of the sight of these people. When we went to rest the following night they

offered us some victuals; but we refused it; and the only comfort we had was in being in one another's arms all that night, and bathing each other with our tears. But alas! we were soon deprived of even the small comfort of weeping together. The next day proved a day of greater sorrow than I had yet experienced; for my sister and I were then separated, while we lay clasped in each other's arms. It was in vain that we besought them not to part us; she was torn from me, and immediately carried away, while I was left in a state of distraction not to be described. I cried and grieved continually; and for several days I did not eat any thing but what they forced into my mouth. At length, after many days travelling, during which I had often changed masters, I got into the hands of a chieftain, in a very pleasant country. This man had two wives and some children, and they all used me extremely well, and did all they could to comfort me; particularly the first wife, who was something like my mother. Although I was a great many days journey from my father's house, yet these people spoke exactly the same language with us. This first master of mine, as I may call him, was a smith, and my principal employment was working his bellows, which were the same kind as I had seen in my vicinity. They were in some respects not unlike the stoves here in gentlemen's kitchens; and were covered over with leather; and in the middle of that leather a stick was fixed, and a person stood up, and worked it, in the same manner as is done to pump water out of a cask with a hand pump. I believe it was gold he worked, for it was of a lovely bright yellow colour, and was worn by the women on their wrists and ancles. I was there I suppose about a month, and they at last used to trust me some little distance from the house. This liberty I used in embracing every opportunity to inquire the way to my own home: and I also sometimes, for the same purpose, went with the maidens, in the cool of the evenings, to bring pitchers of water from the springs for the use of the house. I had also remarked where the sun rose in the morning, and set in the evening, as I had travelled along; and I had observed that my father's house was towards the rising of the sun. I therefore determined to seize the first opportunity of making my escape, and to shape my course for that quarter; for I was quite oppressed and weighed down by grief after my mother and friends; and my love of liberty, ever great, was strengthened by the mortifying circumstance of not daring to eat with the free-born children, although I was mostly their companion. While I was projecting my escape, one day an unlucky event happened, which quite disconcerted my plan, and put an end to my hopes. I used to be sometimes employed in assisting an elderly woman slave to cook and take care of the poultry; and one morning, while I was feeding some chickens, I happened to toss a small pebble at one of them, which hit it on the middle and directly killed it. The old slave, having soon after missed the chicken, inquired after it; and on my relating the accident (for I told her the truth, because my mother would never suffer me to tell a lie) she flew into a violent passion, threatened that I should suffer for it; and, my master being out, she immediately went and told her mistress what I had done. This alarmed me very much, and I expected an instant flogging, which to me was uncommonly dreadful; for I had seldom been beaten at home. I therefore resolved to fly; and accordingly I ran into a thicket that was hard by, and hid myself in the bushes. Soon afterwards my mistress and the slave returned, and, not seeing me, they searched all the house, but not finding me, and I not making answer when they called to me, they thought I had run away, and the whole neighbourhood was raised in the pursuit of me. In that part of the country (as in ours) the houses and villages were skirted with woods, or shrubberies, and the bushes were so thick that a man could readily conceal himself in them, so as to elude the strictest search. The neighbours continued the whole day looking for me, and several times many of them came within a few yards of the place where I lay hid. I then gave myself up for lost entirely, and expected every moment, when I heard a rustling among the trees, to be found out, and punished by my master: but they never discovered me, though they were often so near that I even heard their conjectures as they were looking about for me; and I now learned from them, that any attempt to return home would be hopeless. Most of them supposed I had fled towards home;

but the distance was so great, and the way so intricate, that they thought I could never reach it, and that I should be lost in the woods. When I heard this I was seized with a violent panic, and abandoned myself to despair. Night too began to approach, and aggravated all my fears. I had before entertained hopes of getting home, and I had determined when it should be dark to make the attempt; but I was now convinced it was fruitless, and I began to consider that, if possibly I could escape all other animals, I could not those of the human kind; and that, not knowing the way, I must perish in the woods. Thus was I like the hunted deer:

—"Ev'ry leaf and ev'ry whisp'ring breath

Convey'd a foe, and ev'ry foe a death."

I heard frequent rustlings among the leaves; and being pretty sure they were snakes I expected every instant to be stung by them. This increased my anguish, and the horror of my situation became now quite insupportable. I at length quitted the thicket, very faint and hungry, for I had not eaten or drank any thing all the day; and crept to my master's kitchen, from whence I set out at first, and which was an open shed, and laid myself down in the ashes with an anxious wish for death to relieve me from all my pains. I was scarcely awake in the morning when the old woman slave, who was the first up, came to light the fire, and saw me in the fire place. She was very much surprised to see me, and could scarcely believe her own eyes. She now promised to intercede for me, and went for her master, who soon after came, and, having slightly reprimanded me, ordered me to be taken care of, and not to be ill-treated.

Soon after this my master's only daughter, and child by his first wife, sickened and died, which affected him so much that for some time he was almost frantic, and really would have killed himself, had he not been watched and prevented. However, in a small time afterwards he recovered, and I was again sold. I was now carried to the left of the sun's rising, through many different countries, and a number of large woods. The people I was sold to used to carry me very often, when I was tired, either on their shoulders or on their backs. I saw many convenient well-built sheds along the roads, at proper distances, to accommodate the merchants and travellers, who lay in those buildings along with their wives, who often accompany them; and they always go well armed.

From the time I left my own nation I always found somebody that understood me till I came to the sea coast. The languages of different nations did not totally differ, nor were they so copious as those of the Europeans, particularly the English. They were therefore easily learned; and, while I was journeying thus through Africa, I acquired two or three different tongues. In this manner I had been travelling for a considerable time, when one evening, to my great surprise, whom should I see brought to the house where I was but my dear sister! As soon as she saw me she gave a loud shriek, and ran into my arms—I was quite overpowered: neither of us could speak; but, for a considerable time, clung to each other in mutual embraces, unable to do any thing but weep. Our meeting affected all who saw us; and indeed I must acknowledge, in honour of those sable destroyers of human rights, that I never met with any ill treatment, or saw any offered to their slaves, except tying them, when necessary, to keep them from running away. When these people knew we were brother and sister they indulged us together; and the man, to whom I supposed we belonged, lay with us, he in the middle, while she and I held one another by the hands across his breast all night;



and thus for a while we forgot our misfortunes in the joy of being together: but even this small comfort was soon to have an end; for scarcely had the fatal morning appeared, when she was again torn from me for ever! I was now more miserable, if possible, than before. The small relief which her presence gave me from pain was gone, and the wretchedness of my situation was redoubled by my anxiety after her fate, and my apprehensions lest her sufferings should be greater than mine, when I could not be with her to alleviate them. Yes, thou dear partner of all my childish sports! thou sharer of my joys and sorrows! happy should I have ever esteemed myself to encounter every misery for you, and to procure your freedom by the sacrifice of my own. Though you were early forced from my arms, your image has been always rivetted in my heart, from which neither time nor fortune have been able to remove it; so that, while the thoughts of your sufferings have damped my prosperity, they have mingled with adversity and increased its bitterness. To that Heaven which protects the weak from the strong, I commit the care of your innocence and virtues, if they have not already received their full reward, and if your youth and delicacy have not long since fallen victims to the violence of the African trader, the pestilential stench of a Guinea ship, the seasoning in the European colonies, or the lash and lust of a brutal and unrelenting overseer.

I did not long remain after my sister. I was again sold, and carried through a number of places, till, after travelling a considerable time, I came to a town called Tinmah, in the most beautiful country I have yet seen in Africa. It was extremely rich, and there were many rivulets which flowed through it, and supplied a large pond in the centre of the town, where the people washed. Here I first saw and tasted cocoa-nuts, which I thought superior to any nuts I had ever tasted before; and the trees, which were loaded, were also interspersed amongst the houses, which had commodious shades adjoining, and were in the same manner as ours, the insides being neatly plastered and whitewashed. Here I also saw and tasted for the first time sugar-cane. Their money consisted of little white shells, the size of the finger nail. I was sold here for one hundred and seventy-two of them by a merchant who lived and brought me there. I had been about two or three days at his house, when a wealthy widow, a neighbour of his, came there one evening, and brought with her an only son, a young gentleman about my own age and size. Here they saw me; and, having taken a fancy to me, I was bought of the merchant, and went home with them. Her house and premises were situated close to one of those rivulets I have mentioned, and were the finest I ever saw in Africa: they were very extensive, and she had a number of slaves to attend her. The next day I was washed and perfumed, and when meal-time came I was led into the presence of my mistress, and ate and drank before her with her son. This filled me with astonishment; and I could scarce help expressing my surprise that the young gentleman should suffer me, who was bound, to eat with him who was free; and not only so, but that he would not at any time either eat or drink till I had taken first, because I was the eldest, which was agreeable to our custom. Indeed every thing here, and all their treatment of me, made me forget that I was a slave. The language of these people resembled ours so nearly, that we understood each other perfectly. They had also the very same customs as we. There were likewise slaves daily to attend us, while my young master and I with other boys sported with our darts and bows and arrows, as I had been used to do at home. In this resemblance to my former happy state I passed about two months; and I now began to think I was to be adopted into the family, and was beginning to be reconciled to my situation, and to forget by degrees my misfortunes, when all at once the delusion vanished; for, without the least previous knowledge, one morning early, while my dear master and companion was still asleep, I was wakened out of my reverie to fresh sorrow, and hurried away even amongst the uncircumcised.

Thus, at the very moment I dreamed of the greatest happiness, I found myself most miserable; and it seemed as if fortune wished to give me this taste of joy, only to render the reverse more poignant. The change I now experienced was as painful as it was sudden and unexpected. It was a change indeed from a state of bliss to a scene which is inexpressible by me, as it discovered to me an element I had never before beheld, and till then had no idea of, and wherein such instances of hardship and cruelty continually occurred as I can never reflect on but with horror.

All the nations and people I had hitherto passed through resembled our own in their manners, customs, and language: but I came at length to a country, the inhabitants of which differed from us in all those particulars. I was very much struck with this difference, especially when I came among a people who did not circumcise, and ate without washing their hands. They cooked also in iron pots, and had European cutlasses and cross bows, which were unknown to us, and fought with their fists amongst themselves. Their women were not so modest as ours, for they ate, and drank, and slept, with their men. But, above all, I was amazed to see no sacrifices or offerings among them. In some of those places the people ornamented themselves with scars, and likewise filed their teeth very sharp. They wanted sometimes to ornament me in the same manner, but I would not suffer them; hoping that I might some time be among a people who did not thus disfigure themselves, as I thought they did. At last I came to the banks of a large river, which was covered with canoes, in which the people appeared to live with their household utensils and provisions of all kinds. I was beyond measure astonished at this, as I had never before seen any water larger than a pond or a rivulet: and my surprise was mingled with no small fear when I was put into one of these canoes, and we began to paddle and move along the river. We continued going on thus till night; and when we came to land, and made fires on the banks, each family by themselves, some dragged their canoes on shore, others stayed and cooked in theirs, and laid in them all night. Those on the land had mats, of which they made tents, some in the shape of little houses: in these we slept; and after the morning meal we embarked again and proceeded as before. I was often very much astonished to see some of the women, as well as the men, jump into the water, dive to the bottom, come up again, and swim about. Thus I continued to travel, sometimes by land, sometimes by water, through different countries and various nations, till, at the end of six or seven months after I had been kidnapped, I arrived at the sea coast. It would be tedious and uninteresting to relate all the incidents which befell me during this journey, and which I have not yet forgotten; of the various hands I passed through, and the manners and customs of all the different people among whom I lived: I shall therefore only observe, that in all the places where I was the soil was exceedingly rich; the pomkins, eadas, plantains, yams, &c. &c. were in great abundance, and of incredible size. There were also vast quantities of different gums, though not used for any purpose; and every where a great deal of tobacco. The cotton even grew quite wild; and there was plenty of redwood. I saw no mechanics whatever in all the way, except such as I have mentioned. The chief employment in all these countries was agriculture, and both the males and females, as with us, were brought up to it, and trained in the arts of war.

The first object which saluted my eyes when I arrived on the coast was the sea, and a slave ship, which was then riding at anchor, and waiting for its cargo. These filled me with astonishment, which was soon converted into terror when I was carried on board. I was immediately handled and tossed up to see if I were sound by some of the crew; and I was

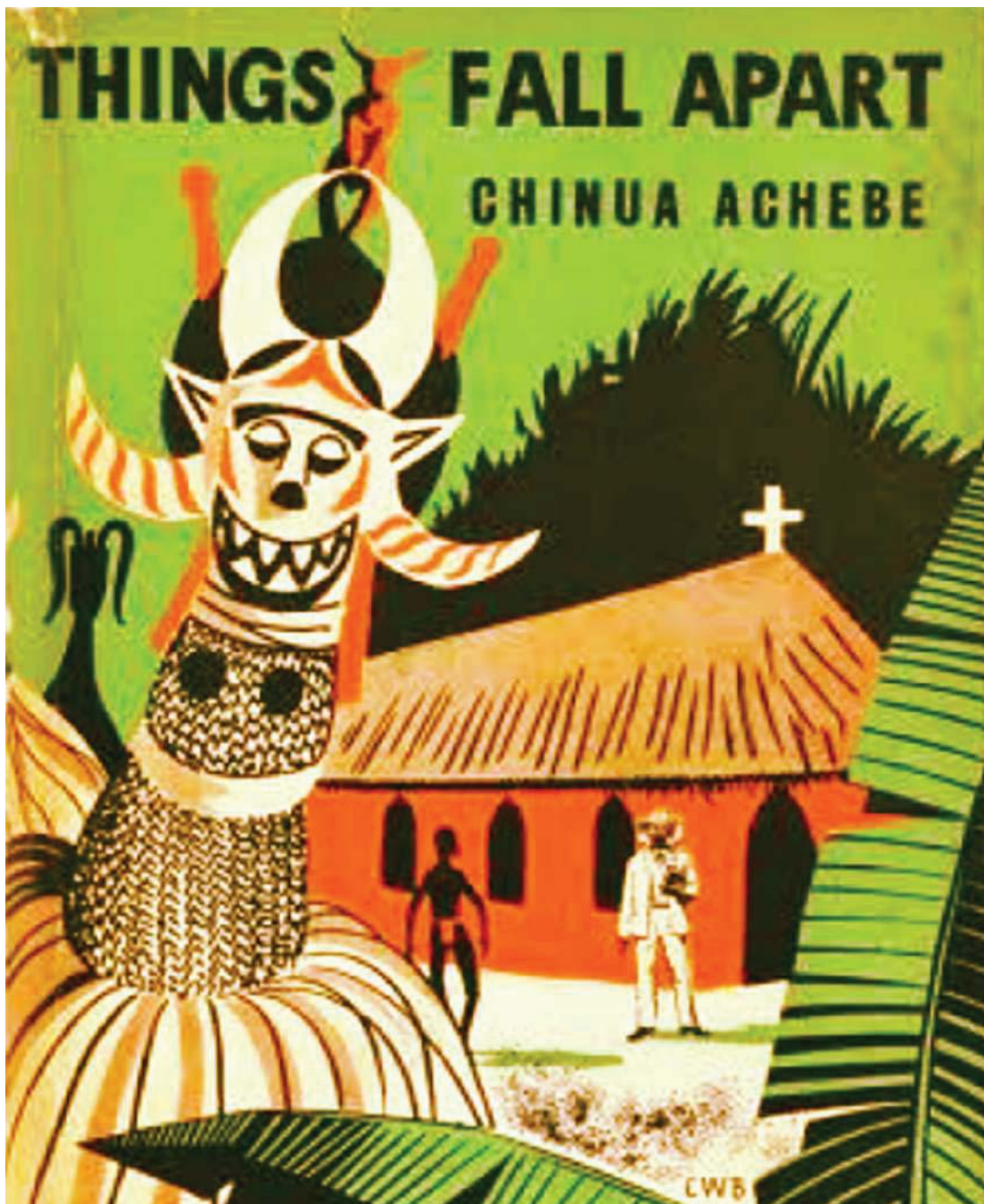
now persuaded that I had gotten into a world of bad spirits, and that they were going to kill me. Their complexions too differing so much from ours, their long hair, and the language they spoke, (which was very different from any I had ever heard) united to confirm me in this belief. Indeed such were the horrors of my views and fears at the moment, that, if ten thousand worlds had been my own, I would have freely parted with them all to have exchanged my condition with that of the meanest slave in my own country. When I looked round the ship too and saw a large furnace or copper boiling, and a multitude of black people of every description chained together, every one of their countenances expressing dejection and sorrow, I no longer doubted of my fate; and, quite overpowered with horror and anguish, I fell motionless on the deck and fainted. When I recovered a little I found some black people about me, who I believed were some of those who brought me on board, and had been receiving their pay; they talked to me in order to cheer me, but all in vain. I asked them if we were not to be eaten by those white men with horrible looks, red faces, and loose hair. They told me I was not; and one of the crew brought me a small portion of spirituous liquor in a wine glass; but, being afraid of him, I would not take it out of his hand. One of the blacks therefore took it from him and gave it to me, and I took a little down my palate, which, instead of reviving me, as they thought it would, threw me into the greatest consternation at the strange feeling it produced, having never tasted any such liquor before. Soon after this the blacks who brought me on board went off, and left me abandoned to despair. I now saw myself deprived of all chance of returning to my native country, or even the least glimpse of hope of gaining the shore, which I now considered as friendly; and I even wished for my former slavery in preference to my present situation, which was filled with horrors of every kind, still heightened by my ignorance of what I was to undergo. I was not long suffered to indulge my grief; I was soon put down under the decks, and there I received such a salutation in my nostrils as I had never experienced in my life: so that, with the loathsomeness of the stench, and crying together, I became so sick and low that I was not able to eat, nor had I the least desire to taste any thing. I now wished for the last friend, death, to relieve me; but soon, to my grief, two of the white men offered me eatables; and, on my refusing to eat, one of them held me fast by the hands, and laid me across I think the windlass, and tied my feet, while the other flogged me severely. I had never experienced any thing of this kind before; and although, not being used to the water, I naturally feared that element the first time I saw it, yet nevertheless, could I have got over the nettings, I would have jumped over the side, but I could not; and, besides, the crew used to watch us very closely who were not chained down to the decks, lest we should leap into the water: and I have seen some of these poor African prisoners most severely cut for attempting to do so, and hourly whipped for not eating. This indeed was often the case with myself. In a little time after, amongst the poor chained men, I found some of my own nation, which in a small degree gave ease to my mind. I inquired of these what was to be done with us; they gave me to understand we were to be carried to these white people's country to work for them. I then was a little revived, and thought, if it were no worse than working, my situation was not so desperate: but still I feared I should be put to death, the white people looked and acted, as I thought, in so savage a manner; for I had never seen among any people such instances of brutal cruelty; and this not only shewn towards us blacks, but also to some of the whites themselves. One white man in particular I saw, when we were permitted to be on deck, flogged so unmercifully with a large rope near the foremast, that he died in consequence of it; and they tossed him over the side as they would have done a brute. This made me fear these people the more; and I expected nothing less than to be treated in the same manner. I could not help expressing my fears and apprehensions to some of my countrymen: I asked them if these people had no country, but lived in this hollow place (the ship): they told me they did not, but came from a distant one. 'Then,' said I, 'how comes it in all our country we never heard of them?' They told me because they lived so very far off. I then asked where were their women? had they any like

themselves? I was told they had: 'and why,' said I, 'do we not see them?' they answered, because they were left behind. I asked how the vessel could go? they told me they could not tell; but that there were cloths put upon the masts by the help of the ropes I saw, and then the vessel went on; and the white men had some spell or magic they put in the water when they liked in order to stop the vessel. I was exceedingly amazed at this account, and really thought they were spirits. I therefore wished much to be from amongst them, for I expected they would sacrifice me: but my wishes were vain; for we were so quartered that it was impossible for any of us to make our escape. While we stayed on the coast I was mostly on deck; and one day, to my great astonishment, I saw one of these vessels coming in with the sails up. As soon as the whites saw it, they gave a great shout, at which we were amazed; and the more so as the vessel appeared larger by approaching nearer. At last she came to an anchor in my sight, and when the anchor was let go I and my countrymen who saw it were lost in astonishment to observe the vessel stop; and were not convinced it was done by magic. Soon after this the other ship got her boats out, and they came on board of us, and the people of both ships seemed very glad to see each other. Several of the strangers also shook hands with us black people, and made motions with their hands, signifying I suppose we were to go to their country; but we did not understand them. At last, when the ship we were in had got in all her cargo, they made ready with many fearful noises, and we were all put under deck, so that we could not see how they managed the vessel. But this disappointment was the least of my sorrow. The stench of the hold while we were on the coast was so intolerably loathsome, that it was dangerous to remain there for any time, and some of us had been permitted to stay on the deck for the fresh air; but now that the whole ship's cargo were confined together, it became absolutely pestilential. The closeness of the place, and the heat of the climate, added to the number in the ship, which was so crowded that each had scarcely room to turn himself, almost suffocated us. This produced copious perspirations, so that the air soon became unfit for respiration, from a variety of loathsome smells, and brought on a sickness among the slaves, of which many died, thus falling victims to the improvident avarice, as I may call it, of their purchasers. This wretched situation was again aggravated by the galling of the chains, now become insupportable; and the filth of the necessary tubs, into which the children often fell, and were almost suffocated. The shrieks of the women, and the groans of the dying, rendered the whole a scene of horror almost inconceivable. Happily perhaps for myself I was soon reduced so low here that it was thought necessary to keep me almost always on deck; and from my extreme youth I was not put in fetters. In this situation I expected every hour to share the fate of my companions, some of whom were almost daily brought upon deck at the point of death, which I began to hope would soon put an end to my miseries. Often did I think many of the inhabitants of the deep much more happy than myself. I envied them the freedom they enjoyed, and as often wished I could change my condition for theirs. Every circumstance I met with served only to render my state more painful, and heighten my apprehensions, and my opinion of the cruelty of the whites. One day they had taken a number of fishes; and when they had killed and satisfied themselves with as many as they thought fit, to our astonishment who were on the deck, rather than give any of them to us to eat as we expected, they tossed the remaining fish into the sea again, although we begged and prayed for some as well as we could, but in vain; and some of my countrymen, being pressed by hunger, took an opportunity, when they thought no one saw them, of trying to get a little privately; but they were discovered, and the attempt procured them some very severe floggings. One day, when we had a smooth sea and moderate wind, two of my wearied countrymen who were chained together (I was near them at the time), preferring death to such a life of misery, somehow made through the nettings and jumped into the sea: immediately another quite dejected fellow, who, on account of his illness, was suffered to be out of irons, also followed their example; and I believe many more would very soon have done the same if they had not been prevented by



the ship's crew, who were instantly alarmed. Those of us that were the most active were in a moment put down under the deck, and there was such a noise and confusion amongst the people of the ship as I never heard before, to stop her, and get the boat out to go after the slaves. However two of the wretches were drowned, but they got the other, and afterwards flogged him unmercifully for thus attempting to prefer death to slavery. In this manner we continued to undergo more hardships than I can now relate, hardships which are inseparable from this accursed trade. Many a time we were near suffocation from the want of fresh air, which we were often without for whole days together. This, and the stench of the necessary tubs, carried off many. During our passage I first saw flying fishes, which surprised me very much: they used frequently to fly across the ship, and many of them fell on the deck. I also now first saw the use of the quadrant; I had often with astonishment seen the mariners make observations with it, and I could not think what it meant. They at last took notice of my surprise; and one of them, willing to increase it, as well as to gratify my curiosity, made me one day look through it. The clouds appeared to me to be land, which disappeared as they passed along. This heightened my wonder; and I was now more persuaded than ever that I was in another world, and that every thing about me was magic. At last we came in sight of the island of Barbadoes, at which the whites on board gave a great shout, and made many signs of joy to us. We did not know what to think of this; but as the vessel drew nearer we plainly saw the harbour, and other ships of different kinds and sizes; and we soon anchored amongst them off Bridge Town. Many merchants and planters now came on board, though it was in the evening. They put us in separate parcels, and examined us attentively. They also made us jump, and pointed to the land, signifying we were to go there. We thought by this we should be eaten by these ugly men, as they appeared to us; and, when soon after we were all put down under the deck again, there was much dread and trembling among us, and nothing but bitter cries to be heard all the night from these apprehensions, insomuch that at last the white people got some old slaves from the land to pacify us. They told us we were not to be eaten, but to work, and were soon to go on land, where we should see many of our country people. This report eased us much; and sure enough, soon after we were landed, there came to us Africans of all languages. We were conducted immediately to the merchant's yard, where we were all pent up together like so many sheep in a fold, without regard to sex or age. As every object was new to me every thing I saw filled me with surprise. What struck me first was that the houses were built with stories, and in every other respect different from those in Africa: but I was still more astonished on seeing people on horseback. I did not know what this could mean; and indeed I thought these people were full of nothing but magical arts. While I was in this astonishment one of my fellow prisoners spoke to a countryman of his about the horses, who said they were the same kind they had in their country. I understood them, though they were from a distant part of Africa, and I thought it odd I had not seen any horses there; but afterwards, when I came to converse with different Africans, I found they had many horses amongst them, and much larger than those I then saw. We were not many days in the merchant's custody before we were sold after their usual manner, which is this:—On a signal given,(as the beat of a drum) the buyers rush at once into the yard where the slaves are confined, and make choice of that parcel they like best. The noise and clamour with which this is attended, and the eagerness visible in the countenances of the buyers, serve not a little to increase the apprehensions of the terrified Africans, who may well be supposed to consider them as the ministers of that destruction to which they think themselves devoted. In this manner, without scruple, are relations and friends separated, most of them never to see each other again. I remember in the vessel in which I was brought over, in the men's apartment, there were several brothers, who, in the sale, were sold in different lots; and it was very moving on this occasion to see and hear their cries at parting. O, ye nominal Christians! might not an African ask you, learned you this from your God, who says unto you, Do unto all men as you would men should do unto you? Is it not enough that

we are torn from our country and friends to toil for your luxury and lust of gain? Must every tender feeling be likewise sacrificed to your avarice? Are the dearest friends and relations, now rendered more dear by their separation from their kindred, still to be parted from each other, and thus prevented from cheering the gloom of slavery with the small comfort of being together and mingling their sufferings and sorrows? Why are parents to lose their children, brothers their sisters, or husbands their wives? Surely this is a new refinement in cruelty, which, while it has no advantage to atone for it, thus aggravates distress, and adds fresh horrors even to the wretchedness of slavery.



**ABOUT THE AUTHOR.**

**OTAH KELECHI \_BORN  
24TH APRIL 2000 IN ABA.**

**HAILS FROM UBURU IN  
IHECHIOWA OF  
AROCHUKWU LGA.**

**STUDIED AT FEDERAL  
GOVERNMENT COLLEGE  
IKOT EKPENE,**

**FRIEDEL KROPFS  
EDUCATIONAL CENTRE  
AND PRESENTLY  
STUDYING PHILOSOPHY IN  
THE UNIVERSITY OF UYO.**

ISBN: 978-98-956-318-9

#AGELONG, IGBO 'THE ANCIENT' HAD BEEN WAY CIVILIZED AND DEMOCRATIC, EVEN WAY BEYOND THE FAR GREE\* OF OLD AND MANY AND UNTIL THE MARRIAGE, COMING A JUDIO-RELIGIO IGBOS, -THE REMNANTS OF THE IMMARRIED PARTIES CHARACTERISTICS CAN STILL VERY FAIRLY BE ANALYSED.